DOCTORAL THESIS

Reluctant Co-Producers of Public Services: Understanding Micro-Level Dynamics

Laidi Surva

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LAIDI SURVA

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TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Business and Governance
Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance

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Supervisor: Dr. Veiko Lember
Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance
School of Business and Governance
Tallinn University of Technology
Tallinn, Estonia

Opponents: Dr. Elke Loeffler
Centre for Policing Research and Learning
The Open University Business School
Milton Keynes, UK

Prof. Dr. Bram Verschuere
Department of Public Governance and Management
University Ghent
Ghent, Belgium

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Declaration:
Hereby I declare that this doctoral thesis, my original investigation, and achievement, submitted for the doctoral degree at Tallinn University of Technology has not been submitted for doctoral or equivalent academic degree.

Laidi Surva .....
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Contents

List of publications

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II. Tõnurist, P., & **Surva, L.** (2017). Is Volunteering Always Voluntary? Between Compulsion and Coercion in Co-production. *Voluntas*, 28:1, 223–247, DOI: 10.1007/s11266-016-9734-z. (1.1)

III. **Surva, L.** (2022). Maintaining the Ideals of Co-Production During Rapid Digitalisation: Comparative Case Study of Digital Restorative Services in Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Portugal. *Voluntas*, DOI: 10.1007/s11266-022-00502-6. (1.1)

Author's contribution to the publications

The main arguments of the thesis have been developed in three original articles. The author's contribution to them was as follows:

I. The author of the thesis is the first author and contributed by formulating the research problem and structuring the research design together with the second and third author. The author of the thesis conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with service coordinators, mentors, and clients. Furthermore, for a better ethnographic insight, the first author spent 3 weeks as an intern in Tallinn Prison to observe and understand the role of prison staff in the co-production process.

II. The author of the thesis is the second author of this article and contributed by formulating the research problem, structuring the research design, conducting data collection and analysis, and summarizing the findings together with the first author. The author of the thesis contributed by collecting data for Case 1 (volunteer firefighters) and Case 2 (assistant police officers), which included in-depth, semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis.

III. The author of this thesis is the sole author of the article.

INTRODUCTION

1 FOCUS AND AIMS OF THE THESIS

Co-production of public services has been used as a concept to describe the changed nature of relationships between public sector organisations and citizens. Since the concept was first introduced in the late 1970s, it has seen a global resurgence in recent years (Nabatchi et al., 2017). Perhaps not least because of the 2008 economic crisis and the politics of austerity (Jukić et al., 2019) and because traditional welfare states are no longer affordable and governments are looking for new ways to provide public services (Voorberg & Bekkers, 2016). In addition, it has been argued that active citizen participation and public service co-production constitute a cornerstone of democracy and democratic governance (Pestoff, 2009).

The key idea behind co-production is that services are delivered not only by the professional and managerial staff in the public sector but are co-produced by citizens and communities (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Joshi & Moore, 2004; Pestoff, 2006; Bovaird, 2007). As citizens bring in their ideas, time, skills, and other resources (Alford, 2002; Verschuere et al., 2012; Lindsay et al., 2014; Spanjol et al., 2015), they become co-creators working with public officials (Voorberg & Bekkers, 2016). This makes public service provision a multi-faceted and relational process, where end-user engagement is integral to its effectiveness (Radnor & Osborne, 2013).

Public sector organisations can be seen to be moving away from standardised service provision, i.e., the role of a service provider delivering a service to a passive recipient – the citizen – toward diversity, multi-actor arrangements, and the development of partnerships with citizens (Lee & Allaway, 2002; Joshi & Moore, 2004; Meuter et al., 2005, Pestoff, 2012). This takes place in the context of a broader shift towards collaborative and network-based forms of service planning and delivery, thus replacing public service monopolies and public-private competition (Torfing et al., 2019; Campanale et al., 2020). Involving citizens in co-production has become a core feature of public value creation (Alford 1998; Alford, 2002; van Beuningen et al., 2011; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013) where risk and responsibility of successful service delivery is shared between the user, i.e., the citizen, and the service provider, making the former partly accountable for service outcomes (Bandura, 2001; Fledderus et al., 2014).

This thesis sets out to analyse the different interrelations and dilemmas that come into play in the process of public service co-production in what Loeffler and Bovaird (2020) call the joint contributions of citizens ('experts by experience') and organisational staff ('experts by profession'). More specifically, the thesis focuses on a particular kind of co-production relationship where service users are reluctant or forced to engage in the co-production process. For service co-production to bring results and create public value, it is imperative that citizens, i.e., the people who use and benefit from the service, give their input. This can be done through actively voicing their needs, and thus, helping with the design of the service, or being personally involved in service implementation. In most cases, it can be assumed that both the citizens and service providers are naturally motivated to participate in public service co-production. This is reflected in current research, which mostly focuses on situations where citizen participation is voluntary or even citizen-initiated. However, much less is known about public service co-production where citizen motivation is either low or absent altogether, especially when participation in the co-production process is somehow externally forced upon the citizen **(II)**. There are many vital public services, such as restorative justice services or prisoner resocialisation

programmes, where service users are reluctant to co-produce, but where increasing the involvement of reluctant co-producers can bring about a leap in service quality and public value. There is a need to better understand the underlying dynamics of these particular kinds of relationships.

With this specific research gap in mind, the focus of the thesis is on co-production of services where citizens might be reluctant to participate either because it is a compulsory process **(I)**, because it is a requirement for receiving their welfare benefits **(II)**, or because the format of the service does not fully support its underlying principles **(III)**.

The main interest of the author lies in the multiple roles that people play as citizens, clients, paying customers, or subjects (Mintzberg, 1996; Nabatchi et al., 2017).[1] A major challenge in this is that service co-production has many meanings and many faces (Alford & Yates, 2016). Additionally, it will be shown how the public service ecosystem (Osborne et al., 2022) can shape service co-production and what its impact is on the underlying principles, efficiency, results, and outcomes of services. This knowledge is helpful for drafting and implementing policy and improving governance. Furthermore, understanding the underlying mechanisms for reluctant citizens to partake in public service co-production could help governments and non-governmental organisations (re-)organise their work to better match the needs of citizens, not least so because different forms of co-production, be they based on individual, group, or collective activities, are highly influenced by micro-level activities. As Osborne and colleagues (2022) concluded, value is not created in isolation by public service users, rather it is the interactions of the institutional, service and individual levels of public service delivery that explain the complexities of public services and value creation at the levels of society, the service, and the individual.

In order to delve into these processes, the author investigated how public sector principles like formalisation, standardisation and the drive for equality can co-exist with the need for an individual approach and a design to co-producing ex-prisoners' resocialisation services **(I)**; what the nature of relationships between volunteers and the state is and how they affect volunteer motivation, and in turn, public service co-production in unemployment services and police and rescue services **(II)**; and what happens to the co-production of restorative justice services when digitalisation enters into the wider picture of public service design and delivery **(III)**. By selecting these cases, the thesis improves our understanding of reluctant co-production, its micro-level dynamics, and especially of how people choose to take part in service co-production. For the latter, the discussion will be focused on the choice–coercion–compulsion nexus that leads people to co-produce. Although there are authors (e.g., Osborne & Strokosch, 2013) who argue that co-production is an innate feature of any service, this thesis uses the choice–coercion–compulsion nexus to offer a more nuanced understanding of how citizens make an active, or at least conscious choice to co-produce public services. Importantly, the focus is on individuals and not organisations participating in service co-production. Although co-production can also be seen as a relationship between citizen-led organisations and the government, or as a governance mechanism in a wider sense, this thesis focuses on co-production at the individual level.

[1] Unless stated otherwise, throughout this thesis, terms like 'citizens', 'users', 'customers' etc. are used as synonyms when referring to people participating in public service co-production either in the planning, designing, implementing or evaluation phase of public services. However, the author acknowledges the differences in roles a person can play in co-creating public policies or services, a point that will be explained further in Section 3.3.

The thesis is guided by the following over-arching research question: **what is the role of choice, coercion and compulsion in involving reluctant co-producers in public service co-production?** Three individual articles were written to answer the research question, drawing mostly on the Estonian experiences.

Article **I**, co-authored with Dr. Piret Tõnurist and Dr. Veiko Lember, posed the question of how the formalization and equality driven public sector affects co-production and hence, user engagement. The article examines the policy implementation phase of co-production, focusing on individual relationships, motivation, and trust, which are largely out of the direct control of the government. It is based on a case study of a volunteer mentoring service for a group of reluctant co-producers – ex-prisoners in Estonia, where experimentation and the inclusion of motivated citizens were used to contend with the limits of traditional service provision and lack of resources. Albeit convincingly showing the possibilities of generating new practices through co-production and the involvement of enthusiastic volunteers, it similarly became clear that the diffusion of bottom-up practices is extremely difficult due to the inherent qualities of the public sector: namely, hierarchical authority and a quest for equality, accountability, and legitimacy. The article helps to understand why (former) offenders would dedicate their time and energy to bettering the services that in a way could be seen as tools used for surveillance, supervision, and superiority.

Article **II**, co-authored with Dr. Piret Tõnurist, sought to answer the question of what happens to volunteering and volunteer motivation when the state knowingly starts to use volunteers in the co-production of public services. It was shown that using citizens in co-production is rife with controversies that influence the very nature of volunteerism. Governments sometimes see volunteers as a substitution or a supplementary resource in service delivery, preying on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to participate in service co-production. The article ties volunteer motivation to the process of co-production and citizen–state interaction, showing how the state uses volunteerism, compulsion and coercion to involve people in service co-production and asking how the state's engagement strategies for citizens influence volunteer motivation and free choice. These effects were illustrated by a comparative case study of volunteering in rescue and police services and in a volunteer programme for the unemployed in Estonia.

The single-authored article **III** investigated the immediate effects of digitalisation on co-producing restorative services and how digitally mediated practices can be normalised while safeguarding the fundamentally co-productive nature of restorative justice. With ever-increasing advancements in digitalisation, not enough attention has been paid to the effects that digitalisation has on the nature and results of public services and on the service co-production process itself. The article set out to uncover the underlying beliefs, behaviours, and practices that support going digital with restorative services. The aim was to see how 'the new normal' of digital services could be introduced to services that are highly reliant on human contact and how this could be done in a way that does not hinder achieving the goals set for the service. The case study carried out with restorative services in four European countries helped to understand the immediate effects of an abrupt shift from face-to-face to digitally mediated co-production where service counterparts were reluctant to make the shift. It was shown that even though digitalisation can have practical benefits in terms of saving costs on travelling or reaching citizens in remote areas, for example, the risk of service quality depletion is too high to consider going fully digital and replacing face-to-face services altogether.

The thesis contributes to the public service co-production research by offering another angle for analysing the citizen–state interaction in public service co-production, namely the choice—coercion—compulsion nexus underlying citizens' motivation in the co-production process for services involving some degree of reluctance from the citizens' side. Such is the case with services where citizens are reluctant co-producers, such as with offenders **(I)** or the unemployed **(II)**, or with services that are designed to reflect and respect the needs of crime victims **(III)**. The assumption of the proposed underlying logic was first discussed in article **(I)**, where the focus was on services designed for ex-offenders, a highly institutionalised policy field. The framework was further developed in article **(II)** which examined state interaction with volunteers and how it affects volunteer motivation and free choice. More specifically, the thesis sets out to illustrate how the state – when co-producing public services with its citizens – can invoke citizens' internal wellbeing, solidarity, and accepted normative values, or at the other end of the spectrum, use sanctions and material rewards to direct people's behaviour. In article **(III)**, the argument was taken further to demonstrate that sometimes reluctance to participate in public service co-production is not so much because of the content of the service but rather because of its format, more specifically it is concerned with how digital channels can change the quality of an otherwise necessary and useful service. Through these three articles, the thesis helps to explain in more detail the role that reluctant co-producers can and should play in service design and delivery.

The rest of the thesis' introduction is comprised of the following sections. First, the research strategy is described. Second, the analytical framework is explained. Third, the empirical findings and their implications are introduced. Fourth, conclusions and future avenues of research are suggested.

2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This thesis examines the phenomenon of public service co-production from three key perspectives: the people involved in the process, the environment they participate in, and the relationships that form the basis of a successful service. According to Morgan and Smircich (1980), all social science, be it quantitative or qualitative, is based on interrelated sets of assumptions regarding ontology, human nature, and epistemology. When quantitative approaches attempt to freeze the social world into structured immobility and see human beings as subjects to the influence of a deterministic set of forces, then qualitative approaches take a more flexible stance. Because to capture the full flow of social phenomena, one needs to accept that human beings not only respond to the social world, but also actively contribute to its creation. For researchers to fully understand social processes, they "can no longer remain as external observers, measuring what they see; they must move to investigate from within the subject of study and employ research techniques appropriate to that task" (Morgan & Smircich, 1980: 498). The aim of this thesis is to go deep in attempting to understand the roles people take in the public service co-production process and how those roles are influenced by the amount of choice, coercion, or compulsion that is involved in different services. Because of the nature of the research question, qualitative research methods are most suitable for finding an answer. Qualitative researchers attempt to go beyond descriptions to obtain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, instead of investigating and describing a phenomenon to a certain level (Anyan, 2013). Therefore, this thesis is based on research methodology for case studies and relies on several data collection and analysis methods in addition to the literature review: document analysis **(I, II)**, in-depth, semi-structured interviews **(I, II, III)**, focus groups **(III),** and direct observation **(I, III)**.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context may not be evident (Yin, 2011). A case study might help to identify new or omitted variables and hypotheses (through a combination of deduction and induction), examine causal mechanisms, develop historical explanations of particular cases, attain high levels of construct validity, and model complex relationships (Bennet, 2004). Case studies rely on the use of theory or conceptual categories to guide the research and analysis of data. Without a theoretical framework – theories, models, and concepts – or specific knowledge of institutional conditions and social patterns, the researcher is in danger of spending considerable time gathering basic information and providing descriptions without meaning (Meyer, 2001). A theory-driven approach to analysing a case helps to capture information on the more explanatory 'how', 'what' and 'why' questions and may help generate knowledge that is potentially transferable to a range of contexts, thus providing input to theory development or helping to refine already existing theories (Crowe et al., 2011). The empirical work of the thesis is primarily informed by various strands of co-production theories as explained in Chapter 3.

There are different types and categories of case studies. For example, a case study can be intrinsic (researching a unique phenomenon, i.e., the case is selected on its own merits, not because it is representative of others), instrumental (using a particular case to gain a broader understanding of an issue or a phenomenon) and collective (studying multiple cases to generate an even broader appreciation of a particular issue) (Crowe et al., 2011). Table 1 below summarises the selected types of cases in the thesis.

Table 1. *Focus and methodology of the publications*

Article	Level of analysis	Case study type	Research methods	Research questions
I	Service	Exploratory Intrinsic Single Interpretivist	Literature review Document analysis Interviews Observation	How does the formalization and equality driven public sector affect co-production and hence, user engagement?
II	Service	Descriptive Instrumental Multi Interpretivist	Literature review Document analysis Interviews	What happens to volunteering and volunteer motivation when the state knowingly starts to use volunteers in the co-production of services?
III	Service	Explorative Abductive Collective Multi Process-oriented	Literature review Interviews Focus groups Observation	What were the immediate effects of digitalization on the nature of restorative services? How to safeguard the underlying principles of restorative justice when providing services digitally? How to embed new practices in existing service processes?

Source: author

Irrespective of the type of case study chosen, the data collection procedures should be guided by the research question and the choice of design. For a case study, the methods often include analysis of documents in archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observations (Yin, 2011). The choice between methods is also subject to constraints in time, financial resources, and access (Meyer, 2001). However, one should always strive for data triangulation – establishing converging lines of evidence – by checking and re-checking at least three independent sources (Yin, 2011). Triangulation enables the researcher to study many different aspects related to the case, examine them in relation to each other and view the process within its complete environment, also the researcher's capacity for understanding becomes an important factor (Meyer, 2001). Based on the research questions posed in the publications of this thesis, and as argued above, four main data collection methods were used. Firstly, direct observation was used in **(I)** and **(III)**, because it allowed studying people in their normal environment and understanding the investigated phenomena from their perspective (Baker, 2006). An observer may gather data as a participant who operates covertly, concealing any intention to observe the setting **(III)**; a participant-as-observer, who forms relationships and participates in activities while observing; an observer-as-participant, who maintains only superficial contact with the people being studied; and a complete observer, who

merely stands back and eavesdrops on the proceedings **(I)** (Meyer, 2001). The major strength of direct observation is that it can illuminate the discrepancies between what people say in interviews and what actually takes place. Observation is a unique method that requires the researcher to take up different roles and to use her/his five senses to collect data (Baker, 2006). It is important, however, to remain detached enough to collect and analyse relevant data.

Secondly, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used **(I, II, III)** to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to their interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena (Anyan, 2013). Interviews allow the interviewees to talk about their experience and understanding. The strength of this method lies in the flexible and responsive interaction between the interviewer and the respondents, which permits probing for meaning, covering topics from several angles, and clarifying the questions for the respondents (Meyer, 2001). Most of the interviews carried out during the writing of this thesis were recorded and transcribed to maintain accuracy and richness of data. This also allowed the author to be fully engaged in the conversation, and thus, encourage the interviewee to talk, possibly resulting in a better flow of ideas and ultimately, more data.

Thirdly, focus group interviews were used **(III)** to gain a better insight into the experience and beliefs of the participants and to clarify some of the data collected through observation and interviews. In focus groups, a relatively informal atmosphere is created and people are encouraged to discuss specific topics in order for the researchers to uncover underlying norms, beliefs, values (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Fourthly, document analysis was used **(I, II)** to supplement and possibly challenge the findings from previous stages. The following paragraphs provide details on how these methods were applied in the publications.

First, in order to examine the micro-level dynamics (individual relationships, motivation, and trust) in the policy implementation phase of co-production, an in-depth single case study approach was taken to analyse an alternative probation service in Estonia. With this service, experimentation and the inclusion of motivated citizens were used to contend with the limits of traditional policymaking and implementation as well as the lack of resources **(I)**. Various data sources were used to analyse the case, including 10 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the service coordinators, mentors, and clients (ex-prisoners) between December 2013 and October 2014. First, the service designers and coordinators were contacted to understand the initial motivation and reasoning behind the service. The coordinators then suggested a list of ex-prisoners to talk to, and after receiving their consent, meetings were organized with them one at a time. Considering the specificity of the target group, it was paramount to ensure that they trust the interviewers. To understand different perspectives, people with different backgrounds were selected: two of the service providers had prior prison experience and four did not; also, three clients were interviewed to understand the recipient's side. Interviews were anonymized for the purpose of full disclosure. Furthermore, for a better ethnographic insight, the author of this thesis spent three weeks as an intern in Tallinn Prison to observe and understand the role of prison staff in the co-production process. In addition, document analysis (policy and concept papers, evaluation reports, previous studies) was carried out prior to and in parallel with the interviews to gain a better understanding of the service process, its factual historic background, and plans for service development in the near future.

Second, to understand how states' increased engagement and interaction with volunteers affects volunteer motivation and free choice, a comparative case study was carried out, analysing the motivation behind state engagement in different forms of co-production: volunteering in rescue and police services and in a volunteer programme for the unemployed in Estonia **(II)**. The strategic documents that guide service provision as well as co-production and volunteer involvement in the respective services were analysed to gather key factual data and trace the history of the services. In order to get a better understanding of the internal mechanisms, procedures, and peculiarities of each of the services, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted between June 2014 and August 2015 (with both inductive and deductive questions) with ministry-level policy makers, mid-level managers, service/volunteer coordinators, and also the volunteers themselves, especially to understand their motivational concerns. The snowball method was used to some extent to reach the most knowledgeable experts or most vociferous volunteers in each service, not to limit ourselves only to official spokespersons. However, it was not possible to fully remove the chance of bias from the interviews as the most active volunteers and volunteer network managers also work together the closest with public authorities. To minimize this problem, information acquired previously from other interlocutors was cross-checked during the interviews, giving a chance to find and analyse possible discrepancies or points of conflict. Interviews were anonymized for the purpose of full disclosure.

Third, in order to explore the effects digitalisation might have on the nature and results of co-produced services, namely, in restorative practices, a comparative case study approach was used **(III)**. The data for the analysis came from observing four online meetings of the European Group for Restorative Justice between April and July 2020, semi-structured interviews with the Estonian restorative justice service manager after each online meeting (April–May 2020), and in-depth interviews and focus groups with restorative service practitioners from Estonia, Finland, Ireland, and Portugal in February and March 2021. At the European Group meetings, the author took notes of practices in various countries as a neutral observer and systematised the notes after each meeting. Based on the discussions at the online meetings, the Estonian restorative justice service manager held reflection sessions from April to July 2020 with volunteer mediators (19 in total), which were followed by the author interviewing the restorative justice service manager to collect reflections from the volunteer mediators. Two additional phone interviews were held with the restorative justice service manager in August after the initial data had been gathered in order to clarify details and understand the roles different parties play in the online mediation process. Lastly, in February and March 2021, based on the insights obtained from the two previous steps, focus group interviews were held with the country representatives from Estonia (three interviewees), Finland (two interviews with two participants in each), Ireland (three interviewees), and Portugal (individual interview). From each country, at least one participant from the online European Group meetings was present and accompanied by at least one practitioner, except for Portugal, with whom an individual interview was conducted. The focus group interviews were carried out online, using Zoom or Skype, as was most convenient to the participants.

Although the methodology of case studies is highly useful for gaining in-depth insight into and a multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue, there are also limitations to the chosen methodology and these, with possible mitigating actions, are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Potential pitfalls and mitigating actions when undertaking case study research*

Potential pitfall	**Mitigating action**
Selecting/conceptualising the wrong case(s), resulting in insufficient theoretical generalisations	Developing in-depth knowledge of theoretical and empirical literature, justifying the choices made
Collecting large volumes of data that are not relevant to the case or too little to be of any value	Focusing data collection on research questions, whilst being flexible and allowing different paths to be explored
Defining/bounding the case	Focusing on related components (either by time and/or space), being clear what is outside the scope of the case
Impossibility of perfectly controlling case comparisons	See above
Lack of rigour	Triangulation, respondent validation, the use of theoretical sampling, transparency throughout the research process
Ethical issues	Anonymising appropriately as cases are often easily identifiable to insiders, informed consent of participants
Integration with the theoretical framework	Allowing for unexpected issues to emerge and not force-fitting, testing out preliminary explanations, being clear about epistemological positions in advance
Information-processing biases	Applying a multi-case approach to add confidence to findings, or have more than one unit of analysis in each case
Indeterminacy/inability to exclude all but one explanation	Coming up with and testing alternative explanations

Based on: Meyer, 2001; Bennet, 2004; Crowe et al., 2011

Stemming from the limitations outlined above, the author of this thesis recognizes that the methodology and the small number of cases chosen will not allow for broader generalisations and the findings and the conclusions based on them apply only in certain contexts. However, the case study approach was not chosen for broad generalisations or representativeness, but for acquiring a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied. In addition, the chosen methodology does not set limits to conducting similar case studies in other countries in a comparative manner, possibly confirming the findings of this thesis.

3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this chapter is to describe the context of co-production and to explain why public service co-production deserves our attention, what is its exact nature and who are the parties involved in it. Hence, this chapter provides the conceptual background for the what, why and who questions of public service co-production. The chapter is structured as follows. First, it starts with clarifying the definition of public service co-production as used in the thesis. Second, it explains why co-production is important for public service efficiency, effectiveness, and outcomes. Third, it looks at who are the actors involved in public service co-production, what kind of roles they play, and what are the main aspects that need to be considered in services that require active input from citizens. Fourth, the chapter takes a closer look at reluctant co-producers and why they deserve extra attention. Through explaining the different aspects of the analytical framework, the thesis proposes that effective public service co-production is highly dependent on the engagement, participation, and understanding of individual citizens. However, it is equally influenced by the wider governance system surrounding service co-production and underpinning public service provision as well as by technological development and digitalisation, which can alter the way services are produced and experienced.

3.1 What is public service co-production?

The understanding that there is a reciprocal relationship between public service organisations and their clients – citizens and communities – can be said to have originated from the Nobel Prize-winning political economist Elinor Ostrom, who argued already in the 1970s that citizen's activities affect both the output and outcomes of public agencies (Ostrom et al., 1978). Parks and colleagues, Elinor Ostrom among them, went on to explain that service co-production is dependent on technological, economic, and institutional influences (Parks et al., 1981). Since then, different terms and definitions have been used to describe the phenomenon of service co-production. According to Jukič and colleagues (2019), there are three different categories of definitions of co-production. First, there are the general definitions where the emphasis is placed on the actors involved in the co-production process. Second, there are the definitions confined to the service delivery phase. Third, there are what they call all-encompassing definitions, which go beyond the delivery phase of services and look at co-production throughout the development, design, management, delivery, and evaluation of the services. In academic literature, co-production of services has been understood as an add-on to public service providers' activities in the production of an output (Ostrom et al., 1978) or a core feature of value creation (Alford, 1998; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013; Fledderus et al., 2015). To go even further, "co-production comprises the intrinsic process of interaction between any service organization and the service user at the point of delivery of a service" (Osborne et al., 2016: 641). It can be seen as direct citizen involvement in the design and delivery of services (Brudney & England, 1983; Pollitt et al., 2006; Voorberg et al., 2015) or a relationship between public organisations and citizens (Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen & Honingh, 2016). Authors have regarded service co-production as a policy tool (Howlett et al., 2017), structural transformation of the public sector (Meijer, 2016), or a participatory governance arrangement moving from a state-centric service to partnerships and collaborations (Campanale et al., 2020; Sorrentino et al., 2018), network governance, and new service configurations (Penny, 2016). In short, this variety of perspectives indicates how the conceptualization of public service

provision has been moving from services *for* the public towards services *by* or *with* the public (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). The aim of this section is to clarify the main terms and definitions used in literature and to briefly describe some of the similarities and disparities to broaden the understanding of the topic and explain why and how the term 'service co-production' is used throughout the thesis.

Co-production research has shown that co-production can be viewed as an umbrella concept, covering a wide variety of activities in any phase of the public service cycle where the state and citizens work together to co-produce benefits (Nabatchi et al. 2017). Co-production can take place for a private benefit of those directly involved in the activity or for philanthropic or altruistic purposes, where the beneficiary is a wider group of people (Bovaird et al., 2015). Research has shown that co-production is a central feature of a wide variety of public services. Different authors have focused on, for example, urban infrastructure and primary education (Ostrom, 1996), parental participation in childcare and preschool education (Pestoff, 2006, 2012), healthcare (Brandsen & Honingh, 2013; Fledderus et al. 2014; Vennik et al., 2016; Sorrentino et al., 2017), and mental health (Slay & Stephens, 2013). There are case studies focusing on fire services and public housing (Alford, 2014), health, community safety and care of the local environment (Bovaird et al., 2015), services for vulnerable adults (Osborne et al., 2022), and prisoner reintegration **(I)**. Co-production is also integral to public safety and employment services **(II)**, community safety (Van Eijk et al., 2017), environmental services (Alonso et al., 2019), social care, health, transport, and criminal justice (Mazzei et al., 2020), local welfare and law and order (Loeffler & Timm-Arnold, 2020), policing and criminal justice (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2020), or restorative practices **(III)**.

Co-production is, therefore, a multi-faceted phenomenon. Having many different aspects to it gives a concept flexibility in practice and research. However, it also brings major challenges because the concept is at risk of becoming too blurry to be analysed properly. For example, co-production can be individual or collective, focusing on citizens, clients, or volunteers, bringing public or private value, being interdependent or substitutable, performed jointly or separately, based on voluntary participation versus people being nudged or coerced to doing so, and more (Alford & Yates, 2016). In addition, co-production can be substitutive, i.e., replacing government inputs by inputs from users, or additive, i.e., adding user inputs to professional inputs (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). Distinguishing between different types of co-production is relevant as it helps to define what is expected from the citizens, allowing us to understand why and how citizens become a part of the service-provision process. Depending on the exact roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the service provision process, co-production can be divided into different types. Osborne and Strokosch (2013) write about consumer co-production, which focuses on the consumer at the operational stage of the service production process, participative co-production that aims to improve the quality of public services already at the strategic planning and design stage of services, and enhanced co-production aimed at changing the paradigm of service delivery and building on user-led innovation. Brandsen and Honingh (2016) identify four potential types of co-production: complementary co-production in service design and implementation, complementary co-production in implementation, co-production in the design and implementation of core services, and co-production in the implementation of core services. Being part of the core service provision process from the design phase onwards places more responsibility on citizens but it also gives them more say in the way

services are provided. In the same instance, it makes service providers put more emphasis on how citizens are involved in the process.

Bovaird and Loeffler (2013) take a rather open approach to service co-production and outline four different types of activities that constitute co-production. Firstly, they talk about co-commissioning, in which citizens give their input at the very early stages of the service process. This includes co-planning of policy, being involved in setting the direction for services in a wider sense. It can also include being involved in prioritisation, for example, through participatory budgeting. This allows citizens' voices to be heard in terms of which services to focus on when planning budgetary resources. Alternatively, it can take the form of financing services, for example, through fundraising. Secondly, people can get involved in co-designing services, having a say in how a service process – or journey – should look like and where the focus should be. Ideally, the aim of getting actively involved in designing services should be to make sure that the methods, channels, timing, formats etc. reflect what each individual client needs or prefers, or, alternatively, what the specific needs or requirements of certain groups of people are. The third type of service co-production is the co-delivery of services in which citizens and public sector organisations actively collaborate to provide a service. It can involve the co-management of services, for example, as school governors or by forming a trust to manage community assets. Co-delivery can also mean co-performing services in peer support groups or through neighbourhood watch type of activities. According to Bovaird and Loeffler, the fourth and last type is co-assessment of services, which can take the form of either co-monitoring service provision or co-evaluating the results and impact of public services. Involving citizens in assessment activities can provide an 'insider view', helping to better understand the impact of different services on citizens. As they put it, only co-assessment can "bridge the gap between hard facts and the perceptions and feelings of local people" (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2013: 11).

There is no one best or perfect co-production mechanism, but there are different possible co-production mechanisms dependent on specific conditions and characteristics (Park, 2020). Different authors have used various definitions to pinpoint the main essence of service co-production. Table 3 shows how the concept of co-production has evolved over the past 45 years.

Table 3. *Definitions of co-production (Source: author, based on literature)*

Author(s)	***Definition***
Ostrom et al., 1978: 383	Citizen activities supplement police activities in the production of an output, the arrest. Citizens, then, in some instances become coproducers with police through the contribution of their activities.
Parks et al., 1981: 1002	Coproduction involves a mixing of the productive efforts of regular and consumer producers. This mixing may occur directly, involving coordinated efforts in the same production process, or indirectly through independent, yet related efforts of regular producers and consumer producers.
Brudney & England, 1983: 59	An emerging conception of the service delivery process, which envisions direct citizen involvement in the design and delivery of city services with professional service agents.
Ostrom, 1996: 1073	The process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not "in" the same organization.
Joshi & Moore, 2004: 40	Institutionalised co-production is the provision of public services (broadly defined, to include regulation) through regular, long-term relationships between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions.
Pollitt et al., 2006: 15	A permanent or temporary involvement of different actors in different stages of a sometimes complex production cycle.
Bovaird, 2007: 847	Provision of services through regular, long-term relationships between professionalized service providers (in any sector) and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions.
OECD, 2011: 32	A way of planning, designing, delivering and evaluating public services, which draws on direct input from citizens, service users and civil society organisations.
Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012: 1121	The public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency.
Fledderus et al., 2014: 427	An arrangement where both clients and 'regular' producers contribute a mix of activities at the point of delivery of public services.
Voorberg et al., 2015: 1356	Active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process.
Brandsen & Honingh, 2016: 431	Coproduction is a relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the work of the organization.

Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016: 1006	Public services, service users and communities making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency.
Osborne et al., 2016: 640	Co-production is the voluntary or involuntary involvement of public service users in any of the design, management, delivery and/or evaluation of public services.
Nabatchi et al., 2017: 769	An umbrella concept that captures a wide variety of activities that can occur in any phase of the public service cycle and in which state actors and lay actors work together to produce benefits.
Brandsen et al., 2018: 3	A joint effort of citizens and public sector professionals in the initiation, planning, design and implementation of public services.
Campanale et al., 2020: 2	Co-production can be considered a new form of governance arrangement and a collaborative management logic whereby different individuals not belonging to the same organization – and, in particular, citizens – provide their inputs to the delivery of public services.
Park, 2020: 457	Co-production is a deliberatively collaborative intra-organisational process with the goal of providing more responsive and effective services and involving both employees and affected lay actors who engage in the implementation/ delivery phase of service production processes with a capacity to influence the end services from which they benefit.

For the purpose of this thesis, with its focus on the individual rather than group processes, service co-production will be approached as **'the voluntary or involuntary involvement of public service users in any of the design, management, delivery and/or evaluation of public services'** (Osborne et al., 2016: 640). This definition allows room for analysing the reasons and motivations of citizens participating in the public service co-production process, hence explaining the choice—coercion—compulsion nexus. Based on the proposed definition of public service co-production, the following subsections of this thesis will look in further detail into different aspects of the co-production of services.

3.2 Why is co-production important?

Traditional professional public services that involve an organisation providing services and clients passively receiving them are somewhat inapt at solving complex wicked problems that increasingly characterise the 21st century society. Instead, we see that the services that truly make a difference in people's lives are designed and often delivered by the service users themselves. Citizen co-producers do not only receive private value from service delivery, but they also contribute to the collective co-creation of public value to stakeholders who do not necessarily engage in the co-production process (Osborne et al., 2016; Steen & Tuurnas, 2018). One of the emerging tasks for public service organisations is to engage, help, and motivate users to generate their own content and solutions to public problems, thus increasing public service effectiveness

(Meijer, 2011). This is best done via co-production processes where the 'production' aspect refers to transforming tangible or intangible inputs into more valuable outputs and the 'co-' means that results are achieved by two or more parties (Alford & Yates, 2016). Seeing the growing importance of the service user in the service process, it is only natural to deduce that a big part of public service outcomes depends on the active participation of citizens and their input.

Service co-production has many benefits compared to traditional service provision where the citizens play a passive role in receiving services. It can reduce costs, improve service quality, and increase user satisfaction (Lee & Allaway, 2002; Pestoff, 2006; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2013). Co-production can improve citizen engagement and social cohesion (Jakobsen, 2013; Fledderus et al., 2014), increase public trust and public value (Meuter et al., 2005; Meijer, 2011), and public sector legitimacy (Verschuere et al., 2012; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013). Co-production can also be seen as a learning process whereby actors develop new ways to confront public sector challenges (Voorberg et al., 2017). It can even be said that engaging citizens in public service co-production can create value in their lives, irrespective of the outcomes of the service (Osborne et al., 2022). The benefits of service co-production are highly context-dependent and the process needs to be seamlessly intertwined with institutional strengths, contingencies, and limitations, making up "a holistic framework of public service management and delivery" (Bovaird et al., 2019: 230).

There is a growing discussion, both in theoretical literature as well as in practice, of involving citizens and interacting with them already in the creative phases of planning and designing public services to take full advantage of their insight, ideas, skills, and knowledge (Voorberg, 2017; Voorberg et al., 2018), leading to better, more suitable, efficient, and effective service outcomes (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Previous research has helped us gain a better understanding of public service co-production. For one thing, co-production is different from passive consumerism as it requires active participation from the citizens' side (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016) to create value together (Rantala & Karjaluoto, 2016; Van Oerle et al., 2018). What is more, service users and their own social networks play a key role in the outcomes of the service process (Tuurnas et al., 2014) and it is expected that citizens take the responsibility for themselves and their environment (Voorberg & Bekkers, 2016). With public services, it is sometimes necessary and not only desirable to involve multiple stakeholders in service provision to achieve public outcomes, whereby service users and their communities take the leading role (Bovaird et al., 2015). Thus, as also argued above, more than ever before, organisations provide services *with*, rather than *for* their customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As Bovaird and Loeffler (2012) said, service outcomes should match with what the service users and citizens see as valuable and not solely reflect what the specialists, service managers, or policymakers see as desirable. They even go as far as saying that taking part in service co-production and value co-creation could bring about benefits to citizens, "which would be unlikely to be achieved without their full involvement in the process" (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012: 1126).

Trust is another aspect that is crucial for successful co-production. Depending on the nature of the service, there can be different issues with regard to trust. For instance, in healthcare services, the citizens need to trust their care worker, the capacity of the system to provide high-quality services, and their own capacity to play their part in the co-production cycle. Similarly, the care workers have to trust their clients to put in the necessary effort that is required for achieving the expected outcomes. Higher patient

involvement increases patients' sense of control, builds effective relationships with physicians, and improves the perception of professional support, all of which help to build further trust in the physician (Fledderus et al., 2014). Seeing how more and more public services are replaced or supported by digital options, such as web portals, social media, digital communication platforms, or algorithmic decision-making (Soto-Acosta, 2020), people also need to have trust – sometimes called digital trust – in the security measures, safety nets, and adequate performance structures (Bélanger & Carter, 2008). On the other hand, a well-designed co-production process can be used to increase citizens' trust in public organisations, even when the processes are being entered into involuntarily or due to obligation. Trustworthiness can be built into the co-production process by early engagement, open communication, expectations management, and perseverance. However, even if public service co-production is used as a means to increase trust, it can also lead to a blurring of responsibility and accountability, higher transaction costs, loss of democracy, reinforced inequalities, putting pressure on vulnerable service users to participate, and co-producers misusing their role, leading to co-destruction of public value (Steen et al., 2018). The shifting of responsibilities in the co-production process can be stressful for both the professional staff as well as the citizens (Tuurnas, 2021).

Since citizens have such a great effect on service outcomes, it is especially important to zoom into the individual level of service co-production. According to Bovaird and Löffler (2012), citizens become the innovators in the service process, as they know things that professionals do not. They also become critical success factors in services to the extent to which they meet service requirements and scrutinise the service. Citizens can be seen as resources when they dedicate their time, information, and financial resources to co-producing a service, thus improving their own quality of life as well as helping others. Citizens are assets in the service process as they have diverse capabilities and talents, which they can share with professionals and other citizens. Lastly, citizens taking part in public service co-production are community developers who "engage in collaborative rather than paternalistic relationships with staff, with other service users and with other members of the public" (Bovaird & Löffler, 2012: 4). Spanjol et al. (2015: 296) go even as far as saying that "co-production behaviours (and their forms) are fully determined by the characteristics of the customer sphere in which they are created and implemented".

3.3 How are public services co-produced?

In co-producing public services, citizens bring their ideas, time, skills, and other resources to the service and, thus, the value-creation process (Bovaird, 2007; Verschuere et al., 2012; Lindsay et al., 2014). It can happen at a collective, group or individual level (Brudney & England, 1983), where, in the latter case, co-producers are the direct beneficiaries of the process (Van Eijk & Gasco, 2018). For some government services, involving citizens in co-production is a core feature of value creation (Alford, 1998; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013; Fledderus et al., 2015), an inherent characteristic of service provision, i.e., the only way to receive a service is to co-produce it. Some authors stress the importance of citizens' motivation, self-efficacy, role clarity, and trust as cornerstones of co-production (Alford & O'Flynn, 2012; van Eijk & Steen, 2014; Fledderus & Honingh, 2015), because in the co-production process, risk and responsibility of successful service delivery is shifted to the user, making them partly accountable for outcomes (Bandura, 2001; Fledderus et al., 2014). Motivation can be both self-centred

and altruistic (van Eijk & Steen 2014), ranging between instrumental, obligatory (Barker, 1993) and social (Handy et al., 2010), i.e., people often take part in something because their friends or colleagues do so. Alford (2002) additionally talks about material (e.g., money, goods, or services), solidary (e.g., group membership or being well-regarded) and expressive (i.e., intangible rewards that derive from contributing to a worthwhile cause) incentives, the effectiveness of which depends on the form of co-production being promoted.

In addition to being motivated to co-produce services, the ability, self-efficacy, self-esteem, role clarity, and perceived capability to co-produce a service are important for the success of the co-production process (see also Walker & Johnson, 2006; van Beuningen et al., 2011; Bovaird et al., 2016). Especially with regard to prolonged, complex services where customer compliance is key to achieving service outcomes, customer capabilities, understanding of service requirements and perceived self-efficacy and provider-efficacy are key determinants of success (Spanjol et al., 2015). With involuntary clients, extra effort has to be paid to explain the aims and objectives of the service and the necessity for active participation in the co-production process to achieve desired results. In order to raise citizens' ability to co-produce, organisations can make the co-production task easier or enhance the client's own capacities to perform co-production (Alford, 2002). Therefore, organisations should pay attention to providing information, advice, or training about the service (Walker & Johnson, 2006; van Beuningen et al., 2011; Ford & Dickson, 2012). This could build citizens' confidence in the service provider and make them aware of their role in the co-production process while increasing their understanding of the usefulness and usability of the services they co-produce.

One layer to be considered in public service co-production is digitalisation, because it can change the 'how' of public service co-production. The use of digital solutions in public service provision has an impact on government-to-citizen interaction as it influences the when, where, and how of service production as well as who and in which role is involved in the process (Lindgren et al., 2019). There is heavy reliance on online communities as communication tools, co-creation platforms, or extensions to customer management systems, which all complement face-to-face services (Van Oerle et al., 2018) and citizens are free to choose whichever contact channel they like, depending on the utility and gratification that they receive (Reddick & Turner 2012: 2). Furthermore, digital technologies might frame the way people participate in co-production, ruining the hands-on bottom-up potential of co-production, or they might prompt organisations to put in less energy to provide a fully citizen-centred service (Nicolini, 2007; Wihlborg et al., 2016). Røhnebæk (2014) also questions whether ICT-enabled work is supporting or hampering efforts to create more client-oriented services as it allows individualising welfare services, but at the same time, increasing digitalisation also means more standardisation and a certain degree of rigidity.

There are ample examples of public sector services being complemented by digital solutions, online services, and other means of reaching the more distant recipients to ensure equal service provision for urban as well as rural areas (OECD, 2016). Digital innovation not only increases public sector efficiency, but there is a possibility that it could transform the ways public sector organisations create public value, coordinate their activities, and collaborate with other actors (Kattel et al. 2019). Using ICT is seen to have transformed business processes and removed the physical presence of the service provider and the client from the value-creation process (Lee & Allaway, 2002; Meuter

et al., 2005; Walker & Johnson, 2006; Osborne et al., 2014; Rantala & Karjaluoto; 2017). As Radnor and Osborne (2013: 282) suggest, "public services are inherently knowledge-driven entities", so in a way, enhancing the methods of service delivery is something natural to the public sector. Sometimes, these innovations are launched to solve a specific problem, whereas at other times, service providers just want to experiment with alternative solutions (Oudshoorn et al., 2005). Sometimes, technological solutions are simply used to coordinate co-production better, other times, new technologies can transform or even substitute traditional co-production practices (Lember, 2018).

Digitalisation can also lead to a new distribution of work, responsibilities, risks and have potentially disruptive effects, not to mention the extra work that is needed for ensuring the high quality of a service that is provided at a distance through a technological solution (Hanlon et al., 2005; Vikkelsø, 2005; May, 2006; Nicolini, 2007; Pagliari, 2007; Halford et al., 2010). In addition, we need to be sure that with the aim of increasing people's access to services, we do not create a further divide between people with access to technology and the skills needed to co-produce services and people without those possibilities. Creating or feeding that digital divide could potentially increase inequalities in our communities. Therefore, the public sector needs to take a proactive role in exploring, developing, and adapting technological solutions in service co-production (Lember, 2018) and there has to be a way to ensure equal access, consistency and a high quality of service, protection of privacy and personal data, effective tracking of utilisation and outcomes, and so forth (Hanlon et al., 2005; Nicolini, 2007; Llucha & Abadieb, 2013; OECD, 2016).

With ICT being used more and more in public service co-production, there are some changes taking place in public bureaucracy and public service provision which require increased interactivity with and greater sensitivity to the diverse needs of customers (Heeks, 1999; Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Pan et al., 2006; Jorna & Wagenaar, 2007; Meijer, 2007). Technologies play a role in how tasks are delegated between staff and citizens, between different professionals, and ultimately, between humans and machines, which means that specific responsibilities and competences are needed both from the professionals as well as the citizens (Oudshoorn, 2008; Lindgren et al., 2019). Street-level bureaucrats are being replaced by ICT systems, programmes, websites, mobile applications, algorithms. Traditional caseworkers might become obsolete as digital decision trees take over their traditional administrative discretion (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002) and a new actor enters public administration, i.e., the digital system (Wihlborg et al., 2016). There is also the question of whether the digital infrastructure of public services will ultimately frame and limit public innovation and digital service design and hinder the scale-up of services (Kattel et al., 2019). With digital solutions, the service space, which in earlier times was located in a public service office, has moved to the customer's sphere, with services being delivered sometimes in people's living rooms. In that sphere, the public servant usually plays a limited role in co-production efforts (Spanjol et al., 2015).

Although digitalisation might make services more effective, accessible, and quicker to deliver (Meuter et al., 2003; Lin & Hsieh, 2007; Madsen & Kræmmergaard, 2016), there are concerns that digital solutions could prove to be exclusive to citizens that deviate from the normal, that they might – hopefully not intentionally – reinforce the norms of some actors in society while excluding others (Røhnebæk, 2014: Wihlborg et al., 2016; Lindgren et al., 2019). With services that are almost automated, the public servant no

longer plays an active role, except perhaps as a consultant that helps the citizen to navigate the self-service options; and as an alternative, 'real people' could focus on difficult cases that require more discretion. Lindgren et al. (2019: 431) have also raised the question of how it would affect the asymmetrical power relationship between the citizen and the public official if the public servant as a human actor with whom citizens can discuss and negotiate public services is replaced by a programmed system where algorithms make decisions. For example, when judges or doctors use computer-generated guidelines for sentencing or for treatment decisions, especially when considering that people "do not always understand or control the internal design logic of these technologies" (Kattel et al. 2019: 4).

This also highlights the importance of security, data protection, equal treatment of different, including atypical people, and meticulous service design that takes these considerations into account. Rantala and Karjaluoto (2017) have stressed the importance of defining all service processes, including the digital and non-digital, and making sure that these are integrated smoothly and that professionals also understand that the digital side of the services is not just a gadget, but an integral part of the service experience for the citizen co-producer. Van Oerle et al. (2018) echo the same sentiment and urge organisations to be agile and respond to any changes in citizens' ongoing service experience and all the activities that extend beyond the traditional service process, including any ICT-based solutions that are meant to increase service satisfaction. In any case, it is important to design the service co-production process in a way that considers different people's needs, abilities, and willingness to interact via technological solutions, resulting in a process that is truly citizen-centred, integrated with other services, and accessible anytime, anywhere (Globerson & Maggard 1991; Reddick & Turner, 2012).

3.4 Who co-produces?

Since co-production of services in the context of this thesis revolves around individual level co-production in commissioning, designing, delivering, or evaluating services as opposed to collaboration between different organisations, be they from the public, private or third sector, it is important to clarify the meaning of 'human' as one of the basic components in service co-production. On a very basic level, we can categorise the involved parties into two broad groups: those working in public service organisations delivering services and those participating as co-producers from the outside. For the latter group, different words have been used, such as citizen, service user, client, customer, consumer, patient, volunteer, expert by experience etc. Van de Walle (2018) notes that in the 1980s and 1990s citizens were starting to be treated as customers, whereas the reforms in the late 1990s and 2000s prompted discussions about citizens not as mere customers but as true consumers of public services on a public service market. Two decades previously, Mintzberg (1996) concluded that everyone of us wears four hats in society – those of the customer, client, citizen, and subject – and these hats reflect on the relationship we have with government. Taking a closer look at the nuances behind these words gives an opportunity to see how people have been considered in the service process and how their role has changed over time. As McLaughlin (2020) points out, the terms used give an indication of the underpinning ideological nature of wider society and that the words are important not only in terms of their meaning but also in relation to the context in which they are used.

According to Clarke et al. (2007: 2), a 'citizen' is a political construct, a key figure in Western capitalist democracies, whereas a 'consumer' is engaged in economic

transactions on the marketplace, choosing between different options available from alternative service providers. Having rights as citizens means that we also have obligations as subjects, e.g., when paying taxes, being drafted into armies, or adhering to government regulations (Mintzberg, 1996). Citizens voice their needs and aspirations via elections and referenda, but in co-production literature we see that the concept of the 'citizen' crosses boundaries with other concepts, such as those of the customers, volunteers, or service users (Voorberg et al., 2018). Academic public administration debates have looked at the wider implications of talking of 'consumers' rather than 'citizens' and the effects of that switch on democracy as such (Van de Walle, 2018). Furthermore, being referred to as 'clients' suggests a relationship where there is a passive receiver of services taking expert assessment and guidance from professionals who have all the power, knowledge and skills required to decide upon the best course of action (McLaughlin, 2020). Alford and Yates (2016), however, say that 'citizens' and 'clients' are roles, rather than categories, and everyone shows signs of both depending on the context. They also bring in another term – the volunteer – who co-produces either indirectly through community organisations or directly, for example, by helping out an elderly neighbour. It is worth noting, though, that volunteers differ from clients because they do not receive any service while co-producing.

In a way, a step up from the passive client is the 'service user' who is not only a consumer but also a producer of the service, because their contribution of time and effort into the service delivery process is crucial to achieving service outcomes and because the production and consumption of a service are inseparable (Alford, 2016). Although there is a top-down element in this term, "suggesting a hierarchical relationship between those who commission and deliver services and those who are in receipt of them", it could be seen from the bottom-up perspective as well, promoting active participation in the process to ensure that services are fit for purpose (McLaughlin, 2020: 36). Another term that has been used to talk about citizens in the service co-production process is 'expert by experience', because every person is best at telling professionals what they want and need from any particular service. In the end, they will be the ones experiencing the intended and unintended consequences of the delivered service (*ibid*.). No matter the term used, being actively involved in the service process puts the citizen or service user at the centre of the creation of value by these services, as it is not the professional staff that create value in the delivery of public services, but service users create value, "for themselves and others, by their co-production and their use of public services" (Osborne, 2021: 2).

According to Loeffler and Bovaird (2020), the role of citizens in public service co-production has evolved from the role of a 'citizen' in classic public administration to the role of a 'customer' under New Public Management and towards 'partner' in the era of public governance. Loeffler and Timm-Arnold (2020) conclude that people's role in service processes is context-dependent. As such, in the hierarchies of classical public administration, citizens are often seen in a passive role, they are used for gathering information, rather than engaging in actual decision-making. In markets, on the other hand, service users are used to give providers necessary information, and as such, are involved in service co-design and, in particular, co-assessment. However, all the strategic decisions are made by service providers based on people's choices in the market. Lastly, in networks, there are no passive citizens or narrow consumers. Instead, people actively collaborate with service providers, engaging in co-production in the various stages of the service process. Nabatchi et al. (2017) go on to explain that citizens can carry multiple

roles simultaneously, depending on the specific service. For example, they could act as citizens when co-planning a policy, as clients when co-producing social services, like participating in a scheme for the unemployed, or as paying customers when renewing their driver's licence. Voorberg et al. (2015) have a similar understanding, as they state that citizens can take different roles in the service process either as co-implementers (citizens performing some implementation tasks), co-designers (citizens decide how the service will be delivered), or as initiators (government as an actor that follows). These types form a nexus where, at one end, the government plays a bigger role in saying what a service should look like, whereas at the other end, the citizens initiate and design services in which the government plays the role of a partner or supporter.

Understanding the human side is not only important with regards to the citizens involved in co-production but also when it comes to professional service providers. This is especially the case when co-production is initiated by public organisations, and as part of the design phase, public servants decide whose contributions are needed, when, and how (Tuurnas, 2021). Service providers can take different roles in the co-production process. They might be providing specific services for individual customers, working as partners with citizens in services where active input is needed from them, such as citizens sorting recyclables from other waste before collection, they can also engage people as traditional citizens deliberating over the direction of the government, or combining some or all of those roles at a time (Thomas, 2013). What is especially challenging is knowing how to interact with the public in all these roles. Bovaird et al. (2015: 1) further suggest that "service professionals solely employ an 'enabling' logic, so the clients actually perform the service task for themselves".

Hence, there is a need to develop new professional skills that support service co-production and the active inclusion of people in their various roles in the service process. Tuurnas (2021) has grouped those skills into three interlinked categories: segmenting skills, communication skills, and enabling skills. First, however, it is important that the professionals notice, understand, and harness the skills and knowledge that citizens can bring to the process (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). Rather than providing a service, the task is to give guidance to the citizen co-producer, ask for and allow input already in the early stages of the service process (Fledderus et al., 2014), because without support, engaging citizens in co-production might create more problems than it solves (Pestoff, 2006). In order to support the citizen in the co-production process, it is important for the organisation to make participation possible, either by simplifying the task or training citizens to perform what is expected of them in terms of service outcomes (Alford & Yates, 2016). In digital services, potential first-time users could be given the opportunity to try the service with no long-term obligations (Meuter et al., 2005). It is important that professionals believe that citizens are educated, skilled, and sufficiently capable to take over some of the tasks in the delivery process and make their own decisions (Fledderus et al. 2015; OECD 2016). Instead of providing a service while citizens are passively receiving it, it becomes the role of the professionals to empower citizens and support their development. Oftentimes, this means learning new skills of how to work *with* people instead of *for* them. This also means collaborating across professional borders and improving the integration of services in order to address the diverse needs and roles of people (Van Gestel et al., 2019).

A new skillset also means that organisations need to rethink how to recruit, train, and develop their staff or, indeed, measure and direct their performance. On another but related issue, there is a need for cultural change in organisations, as many professions

still rely on status and control. Having citizens take some of that professional aura and ethics away might be controversial as professionals feel that 'letting citizens in' is a challenge to their expertise, professional standards, service quality, and legitimacy (Pestoff, 2006; Tuurnas, 2015; Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Park, 2020). So, in addition to acquiring new skills, a change in mindset is needed, which is not always easy to achieve and takes a long time to develop. However, with proper training, change management, and introduction of new methods, it is possible to alter the way services are provided or, rather, co-produced with citizens (Steen & Tuurnas, 2018; Tuurnas, 2021).

Lastly, with digital development, services traditionally delivered face-to-face are being replaced with digital technologies, thus transforming the interactions between actors involved in service co-production and enabling access to services through technological interfaces, often independent of involvement from professional staff (Meuter et al., 2000; Ho & Ko, 2008). However, when it comes to services that require sensitivity, precision, convincing or are highly complex, face-to-face encounters can be irreplaceable for achieving the expected results. Despite that, the growing use of ICT can and has changed the relationship between public service providers and service users. It is important to understand the implications of this shift away from interpersonal interactions, which are considered a cornerstone of building trust and loyalty with the service provider (Meuter et al., 2005; Mort et al., 2009). For service providers, there has to be a balance, therefore, between the speed of digital development of services and the pace and scope to which people are willing to accept the replacement of human contact with technology.

3.5 Reluctant co-producers

For many public services, the users have to actively contribute to the production process in order to create value, otherwise the service cannot be delivered. This makes public service organisations dependent on the citizens' co-productive input to achieve targets or complete tasks (Alford, 2016). Similarly to Alford (1998) and Fledderus et al. (2015), Brandsen and Honingh (2016) argue that co-production is an inherent feature of service provision, i.e., to receive a service is to co-produce, and hence, the question of free will does not even arise and citizens are, in a way, coerced into co-production. Osborne et al. (2016) explain that the production and consumption of services are inseparable processes and the user is a willing or unwilling, conscious or unconscious participant in those processes. As Alford and O'Flynn (2012: 178) so eloquently put it: "Public service co-production is a social exchange, which entails more diffuse and more deferred reciprocity, with less precise and longer term obligations than the immediate quid pro quo transactions between buyers and sellers". This aspect is especially important with regard to public service co-production where citizen-participation in the process is involuntary. For example, receiving medical treatment or attending classes is defined as co-producing a service, because without pupils learning or patients taking medication as prescribed by their doctor, there would not be effective services like education or healthcare. In short, just by receiving a service, you take part in service co-production (see e.g., Alford, 2009). Going even deeper and quoting Osborne and Strokosch (2013: 46): "from a service-dominant approach, there is no way to avoid the co-production of public services because it is an inalienable element of such services. The question thus is not how to 'add-in' co-production to public services but rather how to manage and work with its implications for effective public service delivery". Brudney and England (1983) refer to this as 'captured co-production', where citizens almost automatically participate

in services that are being provided in a top-down manner. In their view, this is the case with most social services or different types of counselling. In contrast, they talk about active and voluntary behaviours where people knowingly give their input to improve service outcomes, like when turning in faulty fire alarms.

Pestoff (2006) says that there are different types of co-production: it can be positive or negative, cooperative or compliant, active or passive. There are co-production processes where citizens participate out of compulsion because of the high value of a particular service or because they feel their identity as a 'good' citizen is under question (Musick et al., 2000). This might be the case with volunteer firefighters in rural areas, for example, where the state has shut down fire brigades as a result of the number of fires having reduced and it not being cost-efficient to keep a full-time fire- brigade in operation (Tammearu, 2012), or citizens feel a strong connection with an important community institution (Brunet et al., 2001). There are also ways to coerce people to co-produce, for example, by giving access to other services or benefits only if citizens participate in the co-production process (Clarke, 2005). Some authors see that governments might be using citizens in service co-production to lighten the burden of economic downturns (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Penny, 2016) and because providing traditional welfare services has become too costly (Voorberg & Bekkers, 2016). In a way, the state can be seen as exploiting the citizens when stressing the need for public service co-production (Mook et al., 2014).

People who participate in a service process out of obligation, for instance, prisoners, probationers, or compulsory treatment patients, are not always seen as co-producing a service. Instead, they can be seen as being institutionalised and having reduced agency to the extent of no longer effectively negotiating the contingencies of life (Kiernan et al., 2016). It can be said that for some services, the service providers, e.g., social workers, rely more on agency policy, legal mandates, and research than they do on the preferences or needs of the service user (McLaughlin, 2009). Similarly, in probation, it is often the probation officer's strategies and reactions, e.g., giving a warning or imposing sanctions, that can guide the supervisee's motivation and ability to comply with the terms set in the sentence (Norman et al., 2022). It has been shown that especially people from marginalised groups can be incapable or unwilling to participate in co-production with professionals (McMullin & Needham, 2018). These citizen co-producers can be referred to as reluctant co-producers. Fledderus et al. (2014) state that even if co-production is inherent, citizens still have a say in the degree of active input they give to the process. Whether it is based on voluntary or coerced citizen participation, service provision can be viewed as an interactive process where the citizen and the professional bring different types of knowledge and skills to the table, and what is more, citizens have a crucial role to play in ensuring the effectiveness of the service.

With reluctant co-producers, the relationship and value creation process are more ambiguous and also less understood compared to situations where citizens are more willing to co-produce. We can see this, for example, with ex-prisoners co-producing re-entry services (**I**), the unemployed volunteering as part of their conditions for unemployment benefits (**II**), or taxpayers declaring their taxes (Çulea & Fulton, 2009). Smith et al. (2012: 1462) go even as far as saying that "the term 'service refusers' might be more appropriate for mental health service users who are subject to compulsory measures of care". However, being coerced into treatment long enough could support the shift from resistance to commitment, leading into better service outcomes (Prendergast et al., 2002). Consequently, engaging reluctant co-producers requires more

effort from public sector organisations, because the service itself is not perceived as beneficial by the client. However, the possible benefits for the citizen co-producer as well as society weigh out the additional effort. One aspect that is crucial for co-production to be successful is trust. Fledderus et al. (2014: 428) cite Offe to define trust as "the belief that others, through their action or inaction, will contribute to my/our well-being and refrain from inflicting damage upon me/us". Citizens' trust in government's ability to deliver services and to really engage them in co-production can increase their willingness to play an active part in the process (van Eijk & Steen, 2014). Alford and Yates (2016) agree with this statement, saying that government's poor performance might undermine citizens' trust, and through that, their willingness to co-produce. However, they also state that sometimes shortcomings in performance can instead be the reason why citizens feel they need to engage in co-production.

If we understand co-production processes as something that people take part in voluntarily and actively, then participation out of obligation does not fit the criteria for some authors (Fledderus et al., 2014). For others, however, resistance to service delivery in areas like the criminal justice system or mental health services is as much a form of co-production as a voluntary and conscious willingness to co-produce (Osborne et al., 2016). Either way, designing service processes that support the motivation and self-efficacy of citizens and help them to generate their own content and solutions in the co-production process will help to make services more efficient and responsive to the needs of service users (Meijer, 2011). This also applies to service users who are traditionally considered reluctant or involuntary participants, perhaps even more so. According to Park (2020), when there is mutual consent from the participants in the co-production process, the services usually yield better outcomes. In order to guarantee good service outcomes, it is necessary to make services more open, accountable, and welcoming of sustained, meaningful citizen involvement (McMullin & Needham, 2018). This is an important task, because user engagement enables customising the service to each client's needs through the process of co-production.

Especially with stigmatised or at-risk citizens, standardised approaches might not always be effective (**I**). If the service is being co-produced as a result of compliance, it is important to understand why people comply, how to encourage compliance, and which enforcement techniques can be used to support better service outcomes, while considering individual level characteristics, motivation to co-produce, and effective supervision techniques to match those (Norman et al., 2022). Another example comes from the healthcare sector where engaging citizens in service co-production can enhance individual and collective wellbeing, but at the same time, there are also high barriers to co-production due to the specific nature of healthcare services (McMullin & Needham, 2018). For example, engaging veterans in traditional models of mental health may be difficult because of the stigma associated with mental illness (Kiernan et al., 2016). Considering that most social work relationships are involuntary, and oftentimes, the recipients of the service are mandated by law to participate and may resent having to do so (Smith et al., 2012), it is doubly important to understand their role in the service co-production process, be it however ambiguous. In order to design a personalised approach, trust is needed between co-production partners, not least because it helps to overcome the barriers built by different values, understandings, aspirations, and abilities, whether these be perceived or real (Hatzidimitriadou et al., 2012). Hence, staff need to use their enabling skills to tackle resistance among citizens and raise their motivation to

be engaged in co-production, especially when there is a feeling that they are performing tasks normally taken on by public service personnel (Tuurnas, 2021).

On the other hand, reluctance to co-produce services might also come from the professionals' side. Healthcare workers and doctors in particular are less than willing to transfer the responsibility on patients, especially when the latter seek help from less evidence-based treatments (McMullin & Needham, 2018). Reluctance might also be caused by the fact that involving citizens in service co-production means a change in work practices at the operational level, as flexibility, openness, and uncertainty replace rigid procedures and bureaucratic rules (Røhnebæk, 2014). Regular staff may feel like they are losing their jobs due to the austerity measures disguised as co-production (Tuurnas, 2021). Giving more say to the citizens might lead to feelings of redundancy or fear of loss of service quality if some or all of the responsibility for service outcomes is put on service users. There might be reluctance because public servants or service providers resist the intrusion of untrained and inexperienced 'experts' into the service process (Pestoff, 2006). The buy-in and support from public servants is, however, a necessary prerequisite for successful service co-production. Especially as reluctant co-producers often lack trust towards public service organisations and staff, it is important that the staff clearly explain what is expected from the citizen in the co-production process and why (Smith et al., 2012).

4 KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING RELUCTANCE TO CO-PRODUCE PUBLIC SERVICES

Public service co-production has received a growing amount of attention and praise, and deservedly so, from academics writing in fields as diverse as public management, public administration, new public governance, service management, third sector research, social innovation, and the list goes on. Oftentimes, co-production rhetoric is normative, placing high relevance on how co-production increases social inclusion, participation, and public trust (OECD, 2016), and improves service outcomes (Campanale et al., 2020), but questions remain whether co-production is, instead, used as a means to an end, not as a goal to aspire to. For example, instead of contributing to citizens' empowerment or making public services more user-responsive, it is a way to keep services running in times of austerity (Jukić et al., 2019). What is more, when the aim is to lower the costs of public services, it is questionable whether co-production actually reduces costs or the costs are simply transferred to the citizens (Pestoff, 2006). As Bovaird and Loeffler (2012) noted, co-production can bring value for money, but it is seldom possible to produce value without money. Understanding the underlying mechanisms in public service co-production becomes even more important in reluctant service co-production, where the citizens participate in the process out of coercion or compulsion, rather than pure choice. Not least because those types of services are often the cornerstone of public safety, public health, and social cohesion. Hence, understanding the logic and motivation behind reluctant co-producers could help the public sector to design more effective and user-driven public services. The aim of this thesis was to take a more detailed look into the individual level of public service co-production, especially into public services where citizen co-producers are reluctant to take part in the co-production process. This meant looking into the dynamics of public service co-production at the micro-level, including in situations where sensitive services have been turned digital to ensure service continuity in circumstances where physical contact between people is limited. Research carried out for this thesis arrived at the following conclusions.

The key actors in any public service are the people involved in the service process.

More so than before, it has become evident that citizen co-producers play a key role in successful public services, be it in the design, implementation, or evaluation phase. It was shown in the first article of this thesis that without the flexible, open, and friendly approach of ex-offenders serving as mentors, the alternative probation service would not have had the same results because of the antagonistic and untrusting way offenders view the state **(I)**. In contrast, the volunteers who were offering their time and lived experience were able to support offenders released from prison to resettle in their communities. Without the human side of the service, without the informal mentoring and support, prisoner reintegration would have been more cumbersome. The article **(I)** explained the importance of personal characteristics of the volunteers offering their support, their intrinsic values, positive social capital, and personal traits that helped to find or build a connection with ex-prisoners, which was key to positive service outcomes. After talking to the offenders serving their prison sentence or those enrolled in the post-prison mentoring service, it was clear that volunteer mentors not working for the government were in a better place to build trust with the offenders, not least so because many of them had personal prior experience in serving a prison sentence or overcoming

substance abuse. On the other side, the sense of ownership of the prisoners and their perceived ability to succeed increased their trust in the co-creation initiative, sometimes also in the government, further ensuring positive outcomes. This shows that a well-designed co-production process can be used to increase citizens' trust in public organisations, even when the processes are being entered into involuntarily or due to obligation. From the government's side, this would require better communication of service goals, managing citizens' expectations, and where possible, engaging the relevant citizens as early on in the process as possible. When it comes to difficult or marginalized target groups, such as offenders **(I)** or the unemployed **(II)**, trust is a key prerequisite. For example, to provide a co-produced mentoring service for ex-prisoners, mutual trust and understanding between the mentors and ex-prisoners is a must, because it takes trust from both sides to get users to co-produce and ensure the effectiveness of the service **(I)**. The more trust there is towards the service provider, the lower the level of perceived risk in getting involved in service co-production.

If an organisation depends on the efforts of their clients in order to produce results, people's motivation is key. There are always reasons for why people take part in co-production and it is important for organisations to understand those reasons in order to encourage co-production, especially when service quality and outcomes depend on the active participation of the client. Seeing that organisations do not have direct control over the efforts that citizens put into co-production, they need to use various tools to raise motivation that fosters internal wellbeing, solidarity, and accepted normative values **(I**; **III)**. Some of those tools could include education and training, effective and realistic expectation setting, customer-friendly instructions, and other efforts that facilitate customer role clarity and perceptions of ability to co-produce services **(III)**. When people have accurate expectations for the co-production process, their motivation and ability to participate increases. This is why it is crucial for public organisations to design the service process in a way that makes it easy for people to participate and to communicate in sufficient detail what is expected of the citizen co-producer. This is especially important for people who are reluctant to participate in the service co-production process, because they, contrary to self-motivated participants, need extra incentives to take the first steps, and even more importantly, they need constant support to keep participating and giving their input for good service outcomes. Reluctance to participate is often related to the most needed services that are not only crucial for the particular citizen but also for the society as a whole, e.g., social services, public healthcare, or criminal justice services.

With reluctant co-producers, it is necessary to identify and communicate the gains of participating in public service co-production more clearly.

With research carried out for this thesis, it was shown that with some citizen co-producers, it is difficult to involve them in public service co-production because of the way they view the state. On the one hand, they may perceive the state as calling all the shots and controlling their every move **(I)** or as supposedly supporting them in getting their life back on track, while actually just using them as a free resource **(II)**. On the other hand, hesitation to co-produce might be caused by the way the service is provided, as was shown with digital restorative services **(III)**. With reluctant co-producers, one or more of the supporting characteristics – e.g., willingness, motivation, knowledge, skills – are missing and must be evoked and supported. Willingness to co-produce can be

sparked either via internal values and motivation or by using external sanctions or material rewards. In the first instance, one tries to compel citizens to participate, and in the latter case, some form of coercion, either through sanctions or rewards, is used **(II)**. However, as was shown in **(III)**, sometimes service providers need to find ways to enhance the skills and build the self-confidence of citizen co-producers. The key is to find what would work for prospective users, what would bring them meaning and make them give their input towards reaching service outcomes. Even if the service brings beneficial outcomes for the society, for instance, the prison service is used as a measure of increasing public safety and security, as long as there is no direct benefit for the citizen, i.e., no one really wants to be incarcerated, there is an extra need to identify, ensure, and communicate the gains of participating in co-production. Especially with reluctant co-producers, it is important to specify in more detail what is expected of them, why the process is both necessary and beneficial from their point of view, and to establish what the citizens need in order to play their role in the co-production process **(I**; **III)**. On the other hand, co-production itself can have motivational effects on citizens, and thus, help to improve the mobilisation of the user's resources. Therefore, motivating citizens can be as important as efficiency gains, public financing schemes, technical solutions, or the organisational setup. When organisations value the people involved in service processes, even the ones that are initially reluctant or hostile, and give them the necessary support, it is possible to produce better service outcomes.

Service co-production is a perfectly natural endeavour for the participating citizen when their personal service goals echo those of the organisation or society in general, and the process is entered into voluntarily, if not even from an initiator's position. On the other hand, co-production is rife with controversies that influence the very nature of volunteerism **(II)** and nowhere more so than in situations where the co-production process is entered into involuntarily or under obligation. If taking part in co-production is a prerequisite for receiving services or social benefits **(II)**, for example, it raises the question of what motivates the citizen to really put in the effort needed to achieve service outcomes. It might be quite the opposite – they would do the bare minimum to fulfil the requirements to be eligible for benefits, not really caring about the effectiveness or efficiency of public services. In order for co-production to bring desired results, the service process has to be designed in a way that makes it easy and favourable to actively contribute to co-production **(I; III)**. It would be most beneficial if the target group are involved already in the service design phase, ensuring the best suited process from the citizens' point of view. Instead, many public services, especially those designed for marginalised groups, such as the incarcerated or the unemployed, are the product of a generic mould that produces services that are cheap and relatively easy to uphold. In addition, although engaging citizens in the co-production process promises better outcomes not only in terms of service quality but also in social cohesion, there still remain contradictions in the co-production process itself, as the attempts to individualise service delivery and take target group preferences and competencies into account do not always go hand in hand with public sector values, such as the universality, accountability, and equality of public services **(I)**. For public service co-production to bring results with reluctant participants, it is important to understand what is causing the reluctance and then come up with strategies and actionable measures to overcome it. Sometimes, the reluctance is personal, in which case a highly individualised approach to each participant is needed. Other times, however, the reluctance might be caused by the

nature of the service, e.g., with services like compulsory treatment or serving a prison sentence. Then, the solution should come from redesigning or rebranding the service in a way that would induce and uphold the willingness to co-produce.

Public service providers must make the co-production process fit the specific context and the needs of the citizens involved, while upholding public values like equality, accountability, and legitimacy.

With the ever-growing role of the citizen co-producer in public service processes, government organisations take up the role of the enabler, i.e., making it possible and easy for citizens to give their input in order to achieve service outcomes. However, even though public service co-production can increase the generation of new ideas and innovative approaches, not least so because of the involvement of enthusiastic volunteers, the inherent qualities of the public sector, namely hierarchical authority and the quest for equality, accountability, and legitimacy, can make it difficult to set up fully bottom-up practices. The formalization and equality driven public sector can have strong effects on co-production and hence, user engagement. Taking part in co-production and giving active input to achieve service goals is very much influenced by individual relationships, motivation, and trust, which are largely out of the direct control of the government. **(I)** As the case study of a volunteer mentoring service for ex-prisoners in Estonia showed, the key to service success lay in the courage to experiment and the inclusion of motivated citizens, often with personal experience of prior incarceration. Even though that approach showed success, it was always at odds with traditional policymaking, immersed in overwhelming paperwork and rules, and lack of resources. The article showed how an out-of-the box solution helped to reduce some of the reluctance towards a service that can otherwise be described by terms like surveillance, supervision, and superiority. Instead, the personal trust they had in the volunteer mentor helped the ex-prisoner to place trust also in the service itself. Even more than that, ex-prisoners were willing to participate in a public service as mentors, thus working in collaboration with the government, usually regarded as the enemy. The government, on the other hand, had to take a step back from strict service standards

Building on that and considering the possible power division in co-production processes, one is left to wonder whether citizens are the ones who have the power, authority, and control over resources, or whether public agencies are the dominant player that sets the tone and writes the rules for public service co-production. Even though a service might be advocated as flexible and citizen-led, it is still hampered by the frigidity and low resource pool of the public sector **(I)**. In addition, when we talk about involving vulnerable people (e.g., the unemployed **(II)** or crime victims **(III)**) in public service co-production, it is especially important to be aware of power imbalances that can occur in the service process. When people are pulled into co-producing a service, role clarity, proper training and induction, and support from the government's side are important. Involving citizens in the co-production process might be the best way to achieve service outcomes, but it has to be clear that the level of responsibility shifted onto the citizens should reflect their capabilities and the benefits they receive from being a part of the service process. The government must do its utmost to make sure the co-production process fits the context and the needs of the specific citizens involved. This, however, can be difficult. Often, there is not enough flexibility in public sector processes to ensure relevant support for different citizens. This was shown with the

volunteer-based alternative probation service, where part of the success of the service was due to the fuzzy lines of responsibility for the volunteers, which increased ex-prisoners' trust in the service **(I)**. Demonstrating extra flexibility in service design and showing willingness to consider the special needs and circumstances of service co-producers can go a long way in reducing the reluctance to be in a co-productive relationship with a public service provider.

The state is using the choice–coercion–compulsion nexus to lure citizens to participate in public service co-production, often substituting or supplementing resources needed for service delivery.

The government uses various engagement strategies to influence citizens' motivation and freedom of choice to volunteer in service provision. The state uses volunteerism, compulsion, and coercion to involve people in service co-production **(II)**. In a way, it can be seen as the state knowingly using volunteers in the co-production of services in order to substitute or supplement resources needed for service delivery. Governments are preying on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of citizens to coax them to participate in service co-production, influencing the very nature of volunteerism. These effects were illustrated by a comparative case study of volunteering in rescue and police services and in a volunteer programme for the unemployed in Estonia **(II)**. It was shown that the state can utilise incentives and sanctions to keep people involved in co-production, playing on the continuum of compulsion and coercion of volunteers. However, it is questionable whether it is possible or even ethical to increase citizen input in co-production in high-public-value areas or to reach population groups in most need through co-production if relevant motivational factors are not there. The state could and should enable citizen participation, especially for services where positive outcomes are dependent on active input from the citizens. However, it is highly risky to build up entire services based on people volunteering. It can be detrimental to service continuity and sustainability. Furthermore, it seems the line between the state as an enabler and the state as advantage taker can become murky at best.

Using citizens' resources for service co-production or using citizens as resources could potentially blur the lines of responsibility and accountability and lead to higher transaction costs for the citizens. It might seem that due to austerity measures, citizens are taking on tasks normally performed by specialists, for example, with volunteers helping to resettle ex-prisoners **(I)** or taking on the tasks of police officers or firefighters **(II)**. Not only does this mean that some of the specialists could be looking at losing their jobs, but it also could result in citizens feeling compelled to give their spare time, energy, and skills, because without their input, there would not be a service at all and public security could suffer. Talking to volunteer mentors, assistant police officers, and people responsible for volunteer firefighters, it did leave a suspicion that the government is pushing for co-production because providing public services without outside help of the volunteers has become too expensive **(I; II)**. To build on that, when service outcomes depend on citizens giving their input, one is left to wonder who would be to blame when services fail. It is hardly fair to assume that once someone toys with the idea of volunteering, they are expected to remain loyal and available whenever their government might need them. In addition, co-production could possibly perpetuate and worsen the unequal distribution of community resources, giving even more control to the more affluent, because once a "free" public service has been created with the help

of volunteers, the government could use the scarce resources elsewhere, in another region or service altogether. This is especially noticeable with digital service co-production, where the digital divide might exclude some groups from access to public services, or providing services digitally might reduce investments in local services, thus taking away the opportunities in remote areas to meet the service provider face-to-face.

Changing of channels can alter the essence of a public service.

With the ever-growing digitalisation of public services either for increased efficiency, reduction of costs or reaching wider target groups, preserving the inherent nature and goals of the once analogue service should remain as the main concern **(III)**. A case study of restorative services was carried out to understand the immediate effects of an abrupt shift from face-to-face to digitally mediated co-production. The article uncovered the underlying beliefs, behaviours, and practices that support going digital with restorative services that have a fundamentally co-productive nature. It was shown that even though digitalisation can have practical benefits, the risk of service quality depletion is too high to consider going fully digital and replacing face-to-face services, particularly for services that are highly reliant on human contact, which is often, if not always, the case with services designed for crime victims. With highly sensitive services, like restorative practices, it was shown that the digital option can be more vulnerable to breakdown of communication, either because of technical glitches or because in screen-mediated conversations, it is often difficult to read the other's emotions or ensure the feeling of security that face-to-face meetings provide thanks to the work of facilitators. Restorative practitioners that were forced online due to the global pandemic noticed a considerable depletion in the quality of the co-production process, and what is more important, the quality of conversations – the cornerstone of mediation **(III)**. With services that rely highly on human contact and face-to-face communication, such as mediation, digitalisation can be met with noticeable reluctance, as happened during the global pandemic in 2020. However, considering the alternative – no restorative services until the pandemic ends – the discomfort and a feeling of insecurity were endured relatively well **(III)**. It did require noticeable changes in the mediator's role during the meditation meetings. In addition, citizens had to take responsibility for creating a safe and suitable environment for mediation, often participating in the process from the comfort of their own homes, sitting behind a computer screen. Taking all that into account, public service providers have to put in extra effort when digitalising services, especially when it could cause reluctance to co-produce services that are necessary for the wellbeing and safety of citizens.

5 CONCLUSION

Research has shown that co-production is a central feature of a wide variety of public services. Services that truly make a difference in people's lives are co-designed and often co-delivered by the service users themselves. Seeing the growing importance of the service user in the service process, it is clear that a big part of public service outcomes depends on the active participation of citizens and their input. However, value is not created in isolation by public service users, but it is the interactions of the institutional, service-level and individual level of public service delivery that explain the complexities of public services and value creation at the levels of society, the service, and the individual. The main task for public service organisations is to engage, help and motivate users to generate their own content and solutions to public problems, thus increasing public service effectiveness. The benefits of service co-production are highly context-dependent and it is important to understand the interrelations and dilemmas that come into play in the process of public service co-production and the multiple roles that people play as citizens, clients, and paying customers.

In order to look into the intricacies of public service co-production, the thesis posed questions about the role of choice, coercion and compulsion in involving reluctant co-producers in public service co-production. For service co-production to create public value and produce outcomes, citizens need to give their active input. This can be done through voicing their needs, and thus, helping with the design of the service, or being personally involved in service implementation. In most cases, both the citizens and service providers are naturally motivated to participate in public service co-production. However, there are services for which citizen motivation is either low or absent altogether, especially when participation in the co-production process is somehow externally forced upon the citizen. Those types of services were in the focus of this thesis, because increasing the involvement of reluctant citizens in service co-production can bring about a leap in service quality and outcomes.

Research carried out for this thesis showed that participating in public service co-production is, on the one hand, influenced by individual relationships, motivation, and trust, which are largely out of the direct control of the government, but on the other hand, the state plays – or can play – an important role as an enabler, allowing a flexible approach to service design and implementation. However, this flexibility comes at a price, as it would mean that each service is as good as the citizens giving their input. This could put public sector values, such as the quest for equality, accountability, and legitimacy, at risk, because the state does not have full control over the service, and hence, over the outcomes. The services analysed within this thesis all require active input from the citizens. It was shown how the state has used different strategies to engage citizens, invoking their intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. In order to keep people involved in service co-production, the state can find ways to engage people who want to participate out of free choice or who feel compelled to do so as 'good citizens'. Lastly, there are people who are coerced into co-production as a prerequisite for other services or benefits. By actively involving citizens in service co-production as a pre-requisite for something else could have the positive side-effect of familiarising citizens with giving something back to their community, and that can have longer-term effects both for the specific citizen as well as the community and society as a whole. No matter the service or its format, citizens can give valuable input only if they have the necessary knowledge,

skills, and means to do so and this is where public service organisations need to be able to provide necessary trainings and on-going support to citizens.

Considering the aforementioned findings, the main argument developed in the thesis is that for public service co-production to work, trust, personal relationships, and citizens' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to contribute their time and energy are key and should be nourished, especially with reluctant service co-producers. Often, such reluctance occurs with services that are important from the standpoint of social cohesion, public safety, and personal wellbeing. Therefore, public service organisations can and should combine choice, coercion and compulsion strategies to entice people to co-produce services. Not only because it can lead to better service outcomes, but being involved in co-production is beneficial for the participants, irrespective of the outcomes of the service. It can improve citizen engagement and social cohesion. With reluctant citizens who often lack trust in the government and feel ill-motivated to contribute to social aims, a well-designed service process and support during co-production can result in good personal and societal outcomes. This is why attention needs to be paid to the smoothness, effectiveness, efficiency, and suitability of the co-production process. Understanding the human factor in all of this is central to designing and implementing services that are necessary, accessible, egalitarian, functional, and responsive to citizens' needs. Appreciating those mechanisms helps to make better decisions about service design, citizen engagement, implementation practices, leading to better service quality, satisfaction, and effectiveness. As an additional feature in service co-production, digitalisation is playing an increasingly prominent role in all phases of the service co-production cycle, starting from ideation and planning through to implementation and evaluation. Because of advances in digital technology, it is paramount not to underestimate the possible negative impact digitalisation can have on service co-production and the roles citizens and professional service providers play in the process.

As is with any research journey, the current thesis has its limitations. For one thing, the conclusions are drawn based on case studies. However, keeping a narrow focus helped to pinpoint some of the intricacies of public service co-production from the perspective of the citizen co-producer as well as the state in its role as an enabler. For future research, it would be fascinating to learn more about the various roles that individuals may adopt to engage in co-production, perhaps also in more radical forms of civil society structures, e.g., communities collaboratively engaging in the delivery of services for their own needs, a commons-oriented organisational structure in collaboration with the public sector that could have its roots as far back as in Ostrom's work. On the other hand, one could delve into the possibilities and pitfalls of more intensive use of digital technologies in the context of public service co-production. So, in addition to looking at digital solutions that could speed up some of the services or make them more accessible, it would also be beneficial to analyse the pros and cons – and risks – of intense usage of digital technologies in the design, implementation, and assessment of public services.

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Abstract

Reluctant Co-Producers of Public Services: Understanding Micro-Level Dynamics

Co-production of public services has been used as a concept to describe the changed nature of relationships between public sector organisations and citizens. The key idea behind co-production is that services are delivered not only by public sector professional and managerial staff but are co-produced by citizens and communities. As citizens bring in their ideas, time, skills, and other resources, they become co-creators working with public officials. This makes public service provision a multi-faceted and relational process, where end-user engagement is integral to its effectiveness. Seeing the growing importance of the service user in the service process, it is clear that a big part of public service outcomes depends on the active participation of citizens and their input. The main task for public service organisations is to engage, help and motivate users to generate their own content and solutions to public problems, thus increasing public service effectiveness.

In order to look into the intricacies of public service co-production, the thesis posed questions about the role of choice, coercion and compulsion in involving reluctant co-producers in public service co-production. In most cases, both the citizens and service providers are naturally motivated to participate in public service co-production. However, there are services for which citizen motivation is either low or absent altogether, especially when participation in the co-production process is somehow externally forced upon the citizen. There are many vital public services, such as restorative justice services or prisoner resocialisation programmes, where service users are reluctant to co-produce, but where increasing the involvement of reluctant co-producers can bring about a leap in service quality and public value. There is a need to better understand the underlying dynamics of these particular kinds of relationships. With this specific research gap in mind, the focus of the thesis is on co-production of services where citizens might be reluctant to participate either because it is a compulsory process, because it is a requirement for receiving their welfare benefits, or because the format of the service does not fully support its underlying principles.

In order to delve into these processes, the author investigated how public sector principles, like formalisation, standardisation and the drive for equality, can co-exist with the need for an individual approach and a design to co-producing ex-prisoners' resocialisation services; what the nature of relationships between volunteers and the state is and how they affect volunteer motivation, and in turn, public service co-production in unemployment services and police and rescue services; and what happens to the co-production of restorative justice services when digitalisation enters into the wider picture of public service design and delivery. By selecting these cases, the thesis improves our understanding of reluctant co-production, its micro-level dynamics, and especially of how people choose to take part in service co-production. For the latter, the discussion will be focused on the choice–coercion–compulsion nexus that leads people to co-produce. More specifically, the thesis sets out to illustrate how the state – when co-producing public services with its citizens – can invoke citizens' internal wellbeing, solidarity, and accepted normative values, or at the other end of the spectrum, use sanctions and material rewards to direct people's behaviour. The thesis also demonstrates that sometimes reluctance to participate in public service co-production is

not so much because of the content of the service but rather because of its format. More specifically, it was shown how digital channels can change the quality of an otherwise necessary and useful service. Although there are authors who argue that co-production is an innate feature of any service, this thesis uses the choice–coercion–compulsion nexus to offer a more nuanced understanding of how citizens make an active, or at least conscious choice to co-produce public services. Importantly, the focus is on individuals and not on organisations participating in service co-production. Although co-production can also be seen as a relationship between citizen-led organisations and the government, or as a governance mechanism in a wider sense, this thesis focuses on co-production at the individual level.

Based on the research questions posed in the publications of this thesis, four main data collection methods were used. Firstly, direct observation was used, because it allowed studying people in their normal environment and understanding the investigated phenomena from their perspective. The major strength of direct observation is that it can illuminate the discrepancies between what people say in interviews and what actually takes place. Secondly, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewees with respect to their interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. The strength of this method lies in the flexible and responsive interaction between the interviewer and the respondents, which permits probing for meaning, covering topics from several angles, and clarifying the questions for the respondents. Thirdly, focus group interviews were used to gain a better insight into the experience and beliefs of the participants and to clarify some of the data collected through observation and interviews. Fourthly, document analysis was used to supplement and possibly challenge the findings from previous stages.

Research carried out for this thesis showed that participating in public service co-production is, on the one hand, influenced by individual relationships, motivation, and trust, which are largely out of the direct control of the government, but on the other hand, the state plays – or can play – an important role as an enabler, allowing a flexible approach to service design and implementation. However, all of this flexibility comes at a price, as it would mean that each service is as good as the citizens giving their input. This could put public sector values, such as the quest for equality, accountability, and legitimacy, at risk because the state does not have full control over the service, and hence, over the outcomes. The services analysed within this thesis all require active input from the citizens and it was shown how the state has used different strategies to engage citizens, invoking their intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. In order to keep people involved in service co-production, the state can find ways to engage people who want to participate out of free choice, or who feel compelled to do so as 'good citizens´. Lastly, there are people who are coerced into co-production as a prerequisite for other services or benefits. By actively involving citizens in service co-production as a pre-requisite for something else could have the positive side-effect of familiarising citizens with giving something back to their community, and that can have longer-term effects both for the specific citizen as well as the community and society as a whole. No matter the service or its format, citizens can give valuable input only if they have the necessary knowledge, skills, and means to do so and this is where public service organisations need to be able to provide necessary trainings and on-going support to citizens.

Considering the aforementioned findings, the main argument developed in the thesis is that for public service co-production to work, trust, personal relationships, and citizens' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to contribute their time and energy are key

and should be nourished, especially with reluctant service co-producers. Often, reluctance occurs with such services that are important from the standpoint of social cohesion, public safety, and personal wellbeing. Therefore, public service organisations can and should combine choice, coercion and compulsion strategies to entice people to co-produce services. Not only because it can lead to better service outcomes, but being involved in co-production is beneficial for the participants, irrespective of the outcomes of the service. It can improve citizen engagement and social cohesion. With reluctant citizens who often lack trust in the government and feel ill-motivated to contribute to social aims, a well-designed service process and support during co-production can result in good personal and societal outcomes. This is why attention needs to be paid to the smoothness, effectiveness, efficiency, and suitability of the co-production process. Understanding the human factor in all of this is central to designing and implementing services that are necessary, accessible, egalitarian, functional, and responsive to citizens' needs. Appreciating those mechanisms helps to make better decisions about service design, citizen engagement, implementation practices, leading to better service quality, satisfaction, and effectiveness. As an additional feature in service co-production, digitalisation is playing an increasingly prominent role in all phases of the service co-production cycle, starting from ideation and planning through to implementation and evaluation. Because of the advances in digital technology, it is paramount not to underestimate the possible negative impact digitalisation can have on service co-production and the roles citizens and professional service providers play in the process.

Lühikokkuvõte

Tõrksus avalike teenuste koosloomes: mikrotasandi dünaamikad

Avalike teenuste koosloome mõistet on kasutatud avaliku sektori organisatsioonide ja kodanike vahelistes suhetes toimunud muutuste kirjeldamiseks. Koosloome põhiidee seisneb selles, et avalikke teenuseid luuakse koostöös kodanike ja kogukondadega, mitte ei osutata pelgalt avaliku sektori spetsialistide poolt. Kodanikest saavad avalike teenuste koosloojad, kui nad panustavad oma ideid, aega, oskusi ja muid ressursse teenusloome protsessi. Seetõttu võib öelda, et avalike teenuste osutamine on mitmetahuline ja suhetest läbipõimunud protsess, kus lõppkasutajate kaasamine on teenuste lahutamatu osa. Vaadates teenusekasutaja tähtsuse kasvu teenuseprotsessis, on selge, et suur osa avalike teenuste tulemuslikkusest sõltub kodanike aktiivsest osalusest ja panusest. Avaliku sektori organisatsioonide põhiülesandeks on kaasata, toetada ja motiveerida kasutajaid looma ise sisu ja lahendusi avalikele probleemidele, suurendades sellega avalike teenuste tõhusust.

Uurimaks avalike teenuste koosloome keerukust, keskenduti doktoritöös sellele, millist rolli mängivad teenusprotsessi kaasamisel koosloomes osalevate inimeste vaba valik, survestamine ja sund. Enamasti on nii kodanikel kui ka teenusepakkujatel olemas sisemine motivatsioon avalike teenuste koosloomes osaleda. Samas on terve hulk teenuseid, milles osalemiseks on kodanike motivatsioon kas madal või puudub üldse, eriti kui koosloome protsess on kuidagi väliselt peale surutud. On palju elutähtsaid avalikke teenuseid, nagu taastava õiguse teenused või kinnipeetavate taasühiskonnastamine, mille puhul teenusekasutajad esmapilgul ei soovi koosloomes osaleda, kuid kus esialgse vastumeelsuse ületamine ja kaasamise suurendamine võib kaasa tuua hüppe nii teenuse kvaliteedis kui ka laiemas ühiskondlikus kasus. Seetõttu on oluline mõista just selliste teenuste koosloome aluseks olevat dünaamikat. Seda spetsiifilist uurimislünka silmas pidades on doktoritöö fookuses nende teenuste koosloome, kus kodanikud on tõrksad kaasa lööma, sest teenuses osalemine on neile kohustuslik, sellest sõltuvad neile määratud sotsiaaltoetused või on asi lihtsalt selles, et konkreetse teenuse formaat ei toeta täielikult teenuse aluspõhimõtteid.

Nendesse protsessidesse süvenemiseks uuris autor, kuidas avaliku sektori põhimõtted, nagu formaliseerimine, standardiseerimine ja võrdsuse poole püüdlemine, võivad kõrvuti eksisteerida individuaalse lähenemise ja kasutajast lähtuva teenusedisainiga endiste kinnipeetavate taasühiskonnastamise teenuste koosloomes; milline on vabatahtlike ja riigi vaheliste suhete olemus ning kuidas see mõjutab vabatahtlike motivatsiooni ja omakorda avalike teenuste koosloomet töötutele suunatud teenuste ning politsei- ja päästeteenuste puhul; ning mis juhtub taastava õiguse teenuste koosloomega, kui avalike teenuste kujundamist ja osutamist hakkab mõjutama digitaliseerimine. Nende juhtumianalüüside kaudu paraneb arusaam vastumeelsest osalemisest teenuste koosloomes, selle mikrotasandi dünaamikast ja eelkõige sellest, kuidas inimesed otsustavad teenuste koosloomes osaleda. Viimase puhul arutletakse valiku-surve-sunni skaala üle, mis inimesi koosloomesse toob. Konkreetsemalt näidatakse doktoritöös, kuidas riik võib avalike teenuste koosloomes panustada kodanike sisemisele heaolule, solidaarsustundele ja aktsepteeritud normatiivsetele väärtustele või kasutada sanktsioone ja materiaalseid hüvesid, et suunata inimeste käitumist. Doktoritöös täheldati ka, et mõnikord ei ole vastumeelsus avalike teenuste

koosloomes osalemise suhtes tingitud mitte niivõrd teenuse sisust, vaid pigem selle formaadist. Täpsemalt näidati, kuidas digitaalsed kanalid võivad muuta muidu vajaliku ja kasuliku teenuse kvaliteeti. Kuigi on autoreid, kes väidavad, et koosloome on iga teenuse loomupärane tunnus, kasutatakse käesolevas doktoritöös valiku-surve-sunni skaalat, et pakkuda nüansirikkamat arusaama sellest, kuidas kodanikud teevad aktiivse või vähemalt teadliku valiku avalike teenuste koosloome osas. Oluline on märkida, et käesolevas töös on fookus taotluslikult üksikisikutel, mitte organisatsioonidel, kes osalevad teenuste koosloomes. Kuigi teenuste koosloomet võib vaadelda ka kui suhet kodanikuorganisatsioonide ja valitsuse vahel või kui valitsemismehhanismi laiemas tähenduses, keskendutakse selles töös koosloomele üksikisiku tasandil.

Lähtudes käesoleva doktoritöö publikatsioonides esitatud uurimisküsimustest, kasutati nelja peamist andmekogumismeetodit. Esiteks rakendati otsest vaatlust, sest see võimaldas uurida inimesi nende tavakeskkonnas ja mõista uuritavaid nähtusi nende vaatenurgast. Vaatluse peamine tugevus seisneb selles, et see võimaldab selgitada lahknevusi inimeste intervjuudes öeldu ja tegeliku olukorra vahel. Teiseks kasutati poolstruktureeritud süvaintervjuusid, et paremini mõista intervjueeritavate arusaamasid seoses kirjeldatud nähtuste tähenduse tõlgendamisega. Selle meetodi tugevus põhineb intervjueerija ja vastajate vahelisel paindlikkusel ja tundlikumal suhtlusel, mis võimaldab uurida tähendusi, käsitleda teemasid mitmest vaatenurgast ja vajadusel selgitada vastajatele küsimusi. Kolmanda meetodina olid kasutusel fookusgrupi intervjuud, et saada parem ülevaade osalejate kogemustest ja uskumustest ning täpsustada vaatluse ja intervjuude abil kogutud andmeid. Neljandaks kasutati dokumendianalüüsi, et täiendada ja võimaluse korral vaidlustada eelmiste etappide tulemusi.

Doktoritöö raames läbi viidud uuringud näitasid, et avalike teenuste koosloomes osalemist mõjutavad ühelt poolt individuaalsed suhted, motivatsioon ja usaldus, mis on suuresti valitsuse otsese kontrolli alt väljas, kuid teiselt poolt mängib riik olulist rolli võimaldajana, pakkudes paindlikku lähenemist teenuste kujundamisele ja rakendamisele. Sedalaadi paindlikkuse hind on siiski kõrge, sest see tähendab, et iga teenus on sama hea või toimiv kui kodanike panus sellesse. See võib seada ohtu sellised avaliku sektori väärtused nagu võrdsus, vastutus ja legitiimsus, sest riigil ei ole täielikku kontrolli teenuse sisu ja seega ka selle tulemuste üle. Kõigi käesolevas töös analüüsitud teenuste puhul oli vajalik kodanike aktiivne panus. Töös näidati, kuidas riik on kasutanud erinevaid strateegiaid kodanike kaasamiseks, panustades nende sisemisele või välisele motivatsioonile. Selleks, et inimesed panustaksid teenuste koosloomesse, saab riik leida erinevaid viise, kaasamaks neid, kes soovivad osaleda vabast tahtest või kes tunnevad end „hea kodanikuna“ selleks kohustatud olevat. Lõpuks on ka inimesi, keda nö sunnitakse koosloomes osalema muude teenuste või hüvitiste saamise eeltingimusena. Sel viisil kodanikke teenuste koosloomesse kaasamisel võib olla positiivne kõrvalmõju – kodanikud õpivad midagi oma kogukonnale tagasi andma ning sellel võib olla pikemaajaline mõju nii konkreetsele kodanikule kui ka kogukonnale ja ühiskonnale tervikuna. Sõltumata teenusest või selle formaadist saavad kodanikud anda väärtusliku panuse ainult siis, kui neil on selleks vajalikud teadmised, oskused ja vahendid, ning siinkohal peavad avalikke teenuseid osutavad organisatsioonid suutma pakkuda kodanikele vajalikke koolitusi ja järjepidevat toetust.

Võttes arvesse eespool nimetatud tulemusi, on doktoritöö peamine argument, et avalike teenuste koosloome toimimiseks on keskne tähtsus usaldusel, isiklikel suhetel ning kodanike sisemisel ja välisel motivatsioonil panustada oma aega ja energiat. Eelkõige tuleks toetada tõrksaid teenuste koosloojaid, sest sageli esineb vastumeelsus

just teenuste puhul, mis on olulised sotsiaalse ühtekuuluvuse, avaliku turvalisuse ja isikliku heaolu seisukohast. Seetõttu võivad ja peaksid avalike teenuste pakkujad kombineerima valiku-, kohustus- ja sundimisstrateegiaid, et meelitada inimesi teenuste koosloomesse. Mitte ainult sellepärast, et see võib viia paremate tulemustega teenusteni, vaid ka seetõttu, et koosloomes osalemine on osalejatele kasulik sõltumata teenuse tulemustest. See võib parandada kodanike kaasatust ja sotsiaalset ühtekuuluvust. Tõrksate kodanike puhul, kellel puudub sageli usaldus valitsuse vastu ja kes pole motiveeritud sotsiaalsete eesmärkide saavutamisele kaasa aitama, võib hästi kavandatud teenuse osutamise protsess ja aktiivne toetus koosloome protsessis osalemiseks anda häid isiklikke ja ühiskondlikke tulemusi. Seetõttu tuleb tähelepanu pöörata koosloome protsessi sujuvusele, tõhususele, tulemuslikkusele ja sobivusele. Inimteguri mõistmine on kõige selle juures võtmetähtsusega, et kavandada ja rakendada teenuseid, mis on vajalikud, kättesaadavad, võrdsed, funktsionaalsed ja kodanike vajadustele vastavad. Nende mehhanismide väärtustamine aitab teha paremaid otsuseid teenuste disaini, kodanike kaasamise ja rakendustavade osas ning võimaldab parandada teenuste kvaliteeti ja tõhusust ning teenustega rahulolu. Teenuste koosloome lisafunktsioonina mängib digitaliseerimine üha olulisemat rolli kõigis teenuste koosloometsükli etappides alates ideede väljatöötamisest ja kavandamisest kuni rakendamise ja hindamiseni. Digitaaltehnoloogia arengu tõttu on äärmiselt oluline mitte alahinnata võimalikku negatiivset mõju, mida digitaliseerimine võib avaldada teenuste koosloomele ning kodanike ja professionaalsete teenuseosutajate rollile selles protsessis.

Appendix: Publications I-III

Publication I

Surva, L., Tõnurist, P., & Lember, V. (2016). Co-Production in a Network Setting: Providing an Alternative to the National Probation Service. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39:13, 1031–1043, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2016.1193752. (1.1)

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Co-Production in a Network Setting: Providing an Alternative to the National Probation Service

Laidi Surva, Piret Tõnurist, and Veiko Lember

Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Tallinn, Estonia

ABSTRACT
This article examines the policy implementation phase of co-production, focussing on micro-level dynamics (individual relationships, motivation, and trust), which are largely out of the direct control of the government. A case of an alternative probation service in Estonia is presented, where experimentation and the inclusion of motivated citizens were used to contend with the limits of traditional policymaking and implementation and the lack of resources. The case shows that while co-production can generate new ideas, the diffusion of bottom-up practices is extremely difficult due to the inherent qualities of the public-sector: authority, accountability, and legitimacy.

KEYWORDS
co-production; desistance; policy experimentation; post-release rehabilitation; standardization

Introduction

Co-production is a way to involve citizens as co-designers and co-implementers of services that are usually delivered by public organizations (for extensive reviews of the literature, see Bekkers, Tummers, & Voorberg, 2013; De Vries, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2014). In general, co-production is seen as a part of the democratization of service delivery with citizen involvement and customer satisfaction as central goals (e.g., Ackerman, 2004; Lelieveldt, Dekker, Voelker, & Torenvlied, 2009; Pestoff, 2012). Specifically, through increased citizen participation, co-production is thought to generate gains in efficiency, service quality, and legitimacy of government (Pestoff, 2006). Moreover, co-production theories hinge on a customer orientation and arguments about creating public value (e.g., Jakobsen, 2013; Meijer, 2011). However, there are inherent contradictions in the co-production process that inhibit its value creation potential, and these contradictions have received less empirical attention in the literature. One of the central contradictions is in the mismatch emerging from attempts to individualize service delivery while maintaining the criteria of universality, accountability, and equality of public services. This is especially important in "transformational" co-production aimed at developing "new user-led mechanisms of planning, delivery, management and governance, requiring and creating a relocation of power and control" (Needham & Carr, 2009, p. 5). As demonstrated in a number of studies, the involvement of private service providers may indeed enhance the freedom of choice for users, but it can also "threaten transparency and accessibility of the service delivery network" (Vancopponolle & Verschuere, 2011, p. 32). At the same time, the existing case studies are usually connected to some format of financial cutbacks and efficiency gains (see De Vries et al., 2014), and there is no empirical evidence as of yet to unequivocally state that co-production leads to the delivery of higher quality service or impacts across the board (Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012).

In this article, a tailor-made, individualized service provision in a standardized environment is analyzed, and the co-production dilemmas that emerge from attempts to balance transparency, equity, and accessibility with increasing the user's freedom of choice in a highly institutionalized policy field are looked at more closely. Thus, the article analyses the contradictory momentums of factors central to co-production: micro-foundations of citizen involvement (motivation, trust, and personal relationships) versus the need for authority, legitimacy, and accountability imposed by state involvement. Public services are traditionally provided by central or local government agencies characterized by and valued for standardization and the need for clear authority and legitimacy. When a service is co-produced, however, other qualities are critical, such as trust, personal relationships, and citizens' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to contribute their time, all of

CONTACT Laidi Surva laidi3011@gmail.com Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia, Akadeemia tee 3, 12618 Tallinn, Estonia.

which can clash with the sometimes inflexible public-sector environment. Although a co-produced service can be praised for its personalized approach, it would still have to be embedded in the otherwise formalized system of public services, especially when being at least partially funded by the government.

Drawing from these differing and sometimes conflicting attributes, the research question guiding the article is how does the formalization- and equality-driven public sector affect co-production and hence, user engagement? In other words, the dilemma is analyzed that emerges from the implementation of tailor-made, individualized solutions, while seeking to maintain universal accountability structures and cohesive service quality in the public sector. To exemplify the former, an overview of the alternative service to the national probation system in Estonia is presented, in which the emphasis is on the value created through the voluntary mentor–prisoner relationship (individualized approach) and how it "overcomes" the feedback from the formalized service provision network within and around the public sector (universal approach). Based on Bovaird's (2007) typology, this case is an illustration of a user/community delivered and co-designed service. The case sets out to provide new insights into the co-production literature by looking in more detail at the role the community plays in service design and delivery and analyzing a situation where citizens are reluctant co-producers, while the government is much more eager, albeit somewhat leery, to engage in co-production. In essence, the case is about the institutionalization of a transformative change into public service delivery to a very specific target group, ex-prisoners, with whom standardized approaches are usually inadequate. Consequentially, co-production in the described circumstances is dependent on socially marginalized users and reluctant communities. Therefore, a contribution is made to the emerging literature on co-production as an engine of social and public-sector innovation, creating a better understanding about the limits of this transformative process.

To this end, first a description is given on how the value–service nexus has been addressed in the co-production literature with the focus on the micro level (individual service providers and users). Second, these insights are used to analyze the alternative probation system for ex-prisoners in Estonia and its effects on desistance. The findings lead to a discussion on the added value of co-production, how it fits into the formal system of rehabilitation, and how the network of various actors connected to the system influences the service. Conclusion is made by analyzing the insights from the case to co-production research more generally.

Linking the macro and micro perspectives of co-production

Co-production-based transformative changes are most frequently discussed under the headline of "social innovation", which usually takes place in a network setting and involves collaboration across boundaries between public officials and citizen stakeholders, including end users (see Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2014). The traditional public administration model puts emphasis on a clear distinction between private and public interests and accountability settings; however, newer, more complex governance mechanisms blur this distinction in order to enable social innovation and transformative changes (Joshi & Moore, 2004). Joshi and Moore (2004, p. 32) argue that co-production is "a preferential shift away from standardized (central) state provision toward recognition of, and sympathy for, diversity, experimentation and multi-actor arrangements". Instead of seeking to make the "old" Weberian system more responsive to citizen expectations (as is the case with New Public Management, for example), co-production seeks to make users and communities a part of planning and delivery (Bovaird, 2007).

Co-production is, therefore, a context-driven phenomenon that evolves out of local necessities (Joshi & Moore, 2004). In a representative government, citizens are part of task allocation, but not part of execution, which is usually assumed to be a playground for professionals (Whitaker, 1980). Co-production goes beyond the traditional democratic processes of a representative government, placing citizens/users in the center of the service delivery process. In the micro perspective of co-production, the idea is not solely to empower citizens as service designers and to democratize the means of service distribution, but also to create additional value from the new form of service provision between the citizen provider and the citizen user (Pestoff, 2006; Pestoff, Osborne, & Brandsen, 2006). However, the ways of value creation and the achievement of transformative change on the micro level are rarely the focus of attention in the relevant research. Thus, Brandsen and Pestoff (2006) assert that a missing dimension in co-production research is the effects of macro- and meso-governance level on the provider–user relationship.

However, concerns at the meso and macro levels can considerably influence processes at the micro level. Thus, if there is a strong need for stability and predictability with a strong regulatory interest—in terms of legal equality or security—formalization and standardization are more common (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). While formalization and standardization help ensure

free and universal access, they may also deter creativity and risk taking (Walker, 2008), and set high and unrealistic expectations that limit the participation of volunteers (Möller, Ender, Mänd, & Surva, 2008). These tensions between accountability and flexibility have been the subject of much research done on the organizational level of co-production (Bovaird, 2007; Joshi & Moore, 2004; for an example of the bureaucratization of nonprofits, see Panet & Trebilcock, 1998), but have been given little attention at the micro level. This is problematic. Government efforts toward formalization and standardization might help produce a cohesive service, but may also damage some aspects of tailored and subject-based service delivery, and thus hinder the success of co-production initiatives, which are especially needed in the context of difficult or marginalized target groups. Dealing with these contradictory interests—the need to standardize versus the need to tailor services to the various motivations and capabilities of citizens—merits further attention in the co-production literature.

Microfoundations of co-production: working with (ex-)prisoners

If one of the micro-level success factors of co-production is indeed the citizen as the key driver of relations (Leone, Walker, Curry, & Agee, 2012; Ryan, 2012) with the application of personal social capital and skills (Andrews & Brewer, 2013; Ostrom, 1996; Porter, 2012; Uitermark, 2014), then the process of standardization in connection with service delivery may create problems. Since "motivation is critical to understanding the behavior of actors in any system, and especially important when government organizations rely on external parties to co-produce public services" (Alford & O'Flynn, 2012, p. 58), it is important to understand the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic drivers to volunteer in a co-production network. Although the drivers can be very diverse (see, e.g., Kotler & Andreasen, 1996; Measham & Barnett, 2007; Rochester, 2006; Schindler-Rainman & Lippitt, 1977), by and large, they can be categorized into four types of motivators: altruistic, instrumental, obligatory (Barker, 1993), and social, which can include the extension of one's social networks, volunteering because friends or colleagues do so, or responding to social pressures to volunteer (Cappellarri & Turati, 2004 cited in Handy et al., 2010). From the state's perspective, the tools to "motivate" citizens toward co-production include emphasizing their internal well-being, solidarity, and accepted normative values, but also directing their behavior with sanctions and material rewards (Alford & O'Flynn, 2012). It is possible to elicit citizen engagement and maintain it on different foundations if looked at from the citizen-led perspective (e.g., volunteerism) as opposed to citizen–state interaction (e.g., co-production). The merger of these two perspectives may help further our understanding of value creation on the micro level of co-production.

The intrinsic motivation to co-produce described above seems to be especially important when dealing with (ex-)prisoners, where strong altruistic (also notably religious) values of volunteers and their positive attitude are a necessity (Chui & Cheng, 2013; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). Desistance of ex-prisoners and the reduction of recidivism rates—clearly in the government agenda—is a field where effective policy-making is, in essence, based on micro-level dynamics, which are largely out of the direct control of the government. Although governments can provide separate or complex services to support re-socialization, the effectiveness of these depends on the offenders' willingness and motivation to co-produce. Although offenders are not a homogeneous group, there are several general risks that ex-prisoners face on their road to desistance, including substance misuse, pro-criminal attitudes, difficult family backgrounds (e.g., experience of childhood abuse or time spent in care), unemployment and financial problems, homelessness, and mental health problems (UK Ministry of Justice, 2014). In addition, person-specific characteristics—attitudes; personal behavior such as lack of impulse control, poor problem-solving skills; lack of empathy; rigid and inflexible thinking; or even mental health problems—influence re-offending (Williams, Poyser, & Hopkins, 2012). Specific risks for the released include difficulties in finding suitable accommodation, inadequate education and training, and irregular employment history (CASS, 2014; Cattell, Mackie, Prestage, & Wood, 2013; Home Office, 2001; Maguire & Nolan, 2007; Seymour, 2006). Earlier works have highlighted that prejudice and discrimination can hinder prisoners' rehabilitation and increase their chance of recidivism (Henry & Jacobs, 2007; Shumilov, 2008; Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004). Given that these personal characteristics are largely out of the control of government, desistance scholars maintain that social relations within and beyond the criminal justice system could be redesigned to bring forth positive outcomes in reducing recidivism (see Graham & White, 2014).

Traditional services rarely target problems that may need the social capital and individual-level skills of both service providers and clients. Moreover, ex-offenders generally do not trust government employees. In some countries, however, community-based initiatives have

sprung up with the aim of improving the skills and job opportunities for ex-offenders (UK Ministry of Justice, 2014); mentoring programs (with support personnel available prior to release from prison) have also been seen helpful in the process of rehabilitation by supporting pre- and post-release transitions from prison to the community (Clancy et al., 2006). The logic behind these programs is that social circumstances, relationships, and motivation are important for changing behaviors and facilitating desistance (Farrall, 2002), and that quality relationships can reduce re-offending by influencing ex-prisoners' lifestyle, including the time spent with other offenders (Cattell et al., 2013). Thus, advocates assert that informal approaches should be favored, individuality respected, and the significance of social contexts recognized: "desistance requires new networks of support and opportunity in local communities and a new attitude towards the reintegration of ex-offenders" (Weaver & McNeill, 2007, p. 1). Moreover, advocates of these approaches argue that traditional public services are usually ineffectual because they are paternalistic and bureaucratic (Leadbeater, 2007, p. 4) and because they concentrate on offenders' human capital (capacities and skills) rather than their social capital (developing relationships and networks for opportunities) (Farrall, 2004; McNeill, 2012).

Building new networks or support and opportunities requires volunteers to use their own social capital and establish personal relationships with the ex-offenders. This may require a fairly tailor-made approach to co-production with high levels of flexibility that take into account the risks of re-offending behavior—a distinctive feature of working with ex-prisoners. In the work with ex-prisoners, three principal focus points have been outlined: risk (interventions should match the risk level), need (only criminogenic needs should be targeted), and responsivity (interventions should match ex-prisoners' characteristics, such as learning style, motivation levels, and personal circumstances) (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). For professionals, "a fourth principle, that of professional discretion, states that clinical judgment should override the above principles if circumstances warrant" (Ward, Melser, & Yates, 2007, p. 209); this principle also holds true for volunteers. In short, there should be room for discretion under certain circumstances, along with flexibility and innovation, intrinsic attributes of co-production.

This setting provides us with an opportunity for studying the micro-level relations of value creation in a co-production setting influenced by citizen motivation, awareness of influence and ownership, accountability, and social capital. The motivation of ex-prisoners and volunteers, and trust between them are the key in this kind of transformative co-production, as service users may be skeptical and reluctant to accept external help, and as any hint of formalization can hinder service quality. Hereinafter, these issues are analyzed through the case of an alternative service to the national probation system in Estonia, where a volunteer-based mentoring service is provided to prisoners returning to community.

Case study: effective policymaking and micro-level dynamics

In response to high crime rates and a high number of prisoners, the national probation system was initiated in Estonia in the early 1990s.[1] The reasons for this were manifold: prisons were heavily overcrowded, prison sentences were long, and there was a lack of mechanisms for social inclusion of (ex-)prisoners and thus, an alternative punishment was needed (Randma-Liiv & Kruusenberg, 2012). The main objective of the newly setup probation system was, and still is, a safer community by offering alternatives to imprisonment. The system serves two ends simultaneously: first, it is a tool for surveillance, and second, it is a complex of resocialization activities and support. Although the probation system has proven itself useful (Ahven, Kruusement, & Salla, 2013), it also has two major shortcomings. First, the probation system is only designed for those prisoners, who are released on parole before their initial term of imprisonment, and second, the ratio of probation officers to those on probation is, on average 1:26 (though it can go as high as 1:40–50), which means that there are few opportunities to conduct intensive individual work on every probationer's risks and needs.[2] Although there have been several rounds of service reform and the engagement of different NGOs

[1]As a response to these challenges, the national probation system was initiated with the vision completed in 1993; the drafting of the Probation Supervision Act started in 1996 and it was passed by the Riigikogu in 1997. In order to alleviate the challenges in the prison system, the Estonian government, among other solutions, also toyed with the idea of prison privatization; an idea that would have changed the context of probation and readaptation systems, but was never implemented (see Lember, 2004).

[2]In May 2014, the number of probationers was 5954 (http://www.vangla.ee/41291, accessed 6.05.2014) and the number of probation officers was 232 (http://www.vangla.ee/41408, accessed 6.05.2014).

in service provision, budget concerns and the lack of capabilities hindered success.

In 2010, the Ministry of Justice commissioned a new concept paper from the Baltic Institute for Crime Prevention and Social Rehabilitation (BICPSR), which laid out a vision of a diaconic[3] intervention strategy or community chaplaincy that would support prisoners with through-the-gate services. It was stated in the concept paper (Üprus, Surva, & Miller, 2010) that an informal support network would be created with the aim of supporting prisoners on their return to society. This network includes volunteer support persons (mentors or life coaches), their supervisors (usually an experienced chaplain or someone with adequate training and acceptance of a congregation), regional coordinators, congregations, and NGOs. This informal network would work in close cooperation with the formal network surrounding an ex-prisoner, including for example, probation, prison, and police officers; social workers, rehab centers for drug addicts and alcoholics, social rehabilitation centers, and housing associations. By involving volunteer mentors 6 months prior to prisoners' release, it was hoped that ex-prisoners would have better access to social and employment services as well as immediate support in critical situations. It was also expected that services provided by various actors would be better integrated and coordinated. Altogether, greater social cohesion and active participation in the labor market—either as employees or active job seekers—was anticipated.

On the heels of the initial plan, the readaptation service is at present delivered by a network of different individuals, organizations, and authorities, where somewhat less attention is paid to religious organizations as was planned in the first concept paper. At the top of this cooperation are the Ministry of Justice and the Estonian Council of Churches, mainly through the work of BICPSR, which can be seen as an implementation agency for the Council. The immediate team consists of a project coordinator, regional coordinators, volunteer mentors, and prison staff who are responsible for risk evaluation in the prison and thereby recommend prisoners for the service. The network also includes municipalities, the Unemployment Insurance Fund offices, NGOs providing different services, congregations, schools, employers, and others. Figure 1 provides an overview of the structure of the service.

As BICPSR had been active in the resocialization of prisoners for more than two decades, they had a very clear understanding of the needs and wishes of prisoners preparing for their release. Furthermore, BICPSR has ex-prisoners among the staff who know at firsthand what people go through when they try to adapt to life in the community. In that sense, the service has been designed in close cooperation with the target group. In addition, there are ex-prisoners among mentors; thus, the involvement of the target group has been the main approach.

The following section gives a deeper insight into how the service works, what are the main motivators

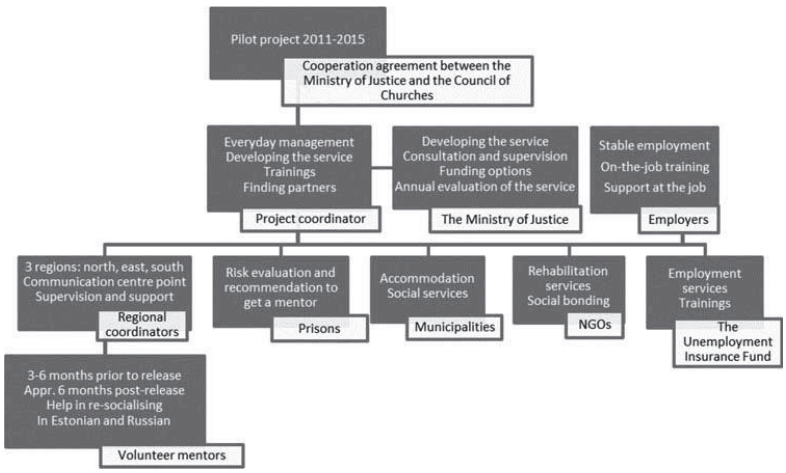

Figure 1. Structure of the service.

[3]A *diaconia* was originally an establishment built near a church building for taking care of the poor and for the distribution of the church's charity in medieval Rome or Naples.

and obstacles for mentors and ex-prisoners, and how the relationships affect the co-production process. It is shown that the innovations originate from bottom-up ideas and new methods in user engagement, which are based on unorthodox and specialized approaches. To show the logic behind the co-production process addressed, various cornerstones are analyzed: "human" relationships in an institutionalized setting, tailor-made service provision in formal circumstances, accountability requirements, and, lastly, the motivation of volunteers and offenders.

To gain insights, 10 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the service coordinators, mentors, and clients. First, the service designers and coordinators were contacted to understand the initial motivation and reasoning behind the service. The coordinators then suggested a list of ex-prisoners to talk to, and after receiving consent, meetings were organized with them one at a time. Taking into account the specificity of the target group, it was paramount to ensure that they trust the interviewers. The list of anonymous interviews is provided in the Appendix. To understand different perspectives, people with different backgrounds were selected: two of the service providers had prior prison experience and four did not; also, three clients were interviewed to understand the receiver's side. Furthermore, for a better ethnographic insight, one of the authors spent 3 weeks as an intern in Tallinn Prison to observe and understand the role of prison staff in the co-production process.

Co-production: "human" relationships in an institutionalized setting

Throughout the interviews, it was made clear that the core value in the co-production process is human contact and the resulting relationship. While mentors could not influence several desistance factors—for example, personal characteristics or family and abuse history—they actively tried to facilitate the co-production process by using their social capital and by creating social links for the prisoner outside the institutionalized setting. To do so, mentors tried to become a confidant by building formal and informal connections with prisoners and avoiding stigma and hierarchical relationships. As one of the interviewees put it: "the mentor steps into the picture as a 'clean sheet of paper', with no prejudice, as much as this is possible" (Interview B).

This was also highlighted as the key difference from prison or probation officers who do not look at ex-prisoners as having specific needs, but as offenders who match certain risk criteria. Mentors find that the main difference in attitudes is related to the fact that officials stress control and mentors stress support; they see there is less substance in what they call the "production line approach" (Interview D). Prisoners—especially the ones who are serving long sentences or are frequently in prison—are perceived as very lonely people and they lack the emotional touch of another human being to which people in the outer world are accustomed (Interview A). It was stressed that it is important to find common ground with the clients: "you cannot seem too smart, arrogant or patronizing" (Interview E) and "the most important feature is to find a common language; the rest would follow" (Interview H). Mentors reiterated that one has to have an "open heart and mind" to be able to support prisoners on their release to society (Interview B). Thus, the service that is provided to the prisoners by mentors is based on a relationship that is built on mutual trust and understanding rather than on giving and following orders. This is important to get users to co-produce, which in turn is vital for the effectiveness of service. As the service requires that the parties see eye to eye, it is felt acceptable to ask for another mentor, if these criteria are not met (Interview B).

Furthermore, both ex-prisoners and mentors brought out the issue of honesty. "It is important never to lie to your mentor and if it happens that you slip and for instance drink alcohol, you should still speak about it" (Interview H). If the same thing happens during probation, the probation officer will be obligated to report it, whereas mentors sometimes overlook minor mistakes and have a wider perspective on achieving desistance. Being too strict on rules and regulations makes it impossible to build a trusting relationship. When a relationship is built on honesty and on understanding the limits, it is easier to talk about the things that really matter (Interview B). "When you have no-one outside, it is sometimes better to just stay in prison. With a mentor, you always have someone to call, 24/7 and if you are ever in need, they would help" (Interview H).

Material help is considered important but less so than the chance to communicate and talk. Bad social ties are often a reason why people return to prison, mentoring network gives an alternative to that choice (Interview I). The setting up of at least a temporary social network around the ex-prisoner for a couple of weeks after their release is seen as vitally important, especially for drug or alcohol addicts. Later, this network can be of help in finding and keeping a job and in establishing social relations within the community. As one example showed, mentors are engaging ex-prisoners in the construction of a new church; they are using a model of the family so the ex-prisoners will get used

to working again (Interview B). Having social ties means you have someone who gives you hope (Interview H). "My mentor is thinking of building a rehabilitation farm one day where the prisoners can go to, I want to be part of that process, I think it is a really good idea" (Interview G). Furthermore, sometimes a contact created during service provision might continue even after the provision of the service has officially ended (something that would rarely happen in formal circumstances); ex-prisoners are often brought into the mentor's social network (e.g., their congregation) so that ties and support can continue long after the mentoring service has ended.

As was seen during the internship, while necessary for fostering desistance, it is strictly forbidden for prison officers to build friendly relations with offenders due to many security risks. Officially, it is not allowed for mentors to become too friendly with ex-prisoners either (to invite them to their homes or take over their responsibilities), but the line between what is and what is not allowed is a bit blurrier. In a way, it is up to each mentor to make sure that the emotional, social, or financial ties with ex-prisoners remain as professional as possible and as friendly as necessary (Interview C). As one of the interviewees put it: "The more you invest into a relationship, the more valuable the relationship is, the better the results are" (Interview A). At the same time, mentors also see the need to protect themselves: "You always need to be clear about one thing: we are not their friends. This is one way to protect yourself, otherwise they might end up at your doorstep, demanding things" (Interview B). In a more formalized setting this would not even be considered as an option because strict rules of conduct and regulations on how to communicate with (ex-)offenders forbid, in principle, any kind of deliberation or discretion in the matter (several examples of the former were observed during the internship[4]).

Tailor-made service versus formalization

As can be seen from the previous section, the key to effective co-production in this context is the ability of the volunteer mentor to establish trustful relationships with ex-prisoners and to come up with tailor-made solutions matching the needs of each individual ex-prisoner. For that to happen, relationships are partially developed inside prison walls (mentors are allowed contact with prisoners 6 months prior to their release) and continue for up to 6–8 months after release. Yet, the interviews and ethnographic field study revealed that there are some systemic problems that make trust building and innovation highly challenging.

The prevailing organizational interests, ideologies, and routines of different service partners are highly divergent. The interviewees reported that ideally, mentoring services should be an integral part of the larger imprisonment system and linked to social services outside of prison walls, but the public-sector stakeholders rarely see mentors as their equal partners (Interview C). This is echoed in the everyday practice of the service, where prisons have been reluctant to change their internal routines (Interview G), for example, being unwilling to allow prison meetings off-hour, which is highly needed because mentors are volunteers and usually employed elsewhere. There is also a lack of promotion inside prison, which could easily be made a task of the contact persons assigned to each prisoner. Late notice of someone's release and of their need for mentoring service also affects the quality of the service (time in needed to build a trust-based relationship); sometimes there are also restrictions because of security reasons, which are not explained ("security reasons" is the term used by prison staff) (Interviews B, C, D, E, and F). Moreover, there have been obstacles in the involvement of the target group, because the majority of the ex-offenders who have applied to become a mentor have not passed their security check due to prison regulations and practices. (There are a few exceptions; there are currently 10 ex-offenders turned mentors of whom a couple have the permission to work inside prisons, the rest only provide mentoring after the prisoner is released.)

Challenges in the public support system outside of prison are similar. For example, ex-prisoners experience difficulties in applying for unemployment benefits and in participating in programs aimed at developing their work habits due to the fact that their health insurance takes effect within a month after applying for unemployment status (Interview B). Yet, attempts to change the situation have so far failed due to the

[4]For example, during the internship in the prison there was an occasion, where a prisoner asked his official contact officer in prison if he could be released a bit earlier or later than the official time of release set in prison rules. He wanted to avoid meeting his former criminal friends he knew would greet him at the prison gates. The officer's response was that it is not in the rules and there are no exceptions. A similar thing happened to a prisoner with drug addiction. His day of release was approaching and the officer listened to his fears of re-using but did not come up with any suggestion on how to avoid slipping, for example, giving information on service providers. "It is not our job to give advice like that", was her response when asked about it (notes from internship at Tallinn Prison from 13 to 31 October 2014).

opposition of various public-sector stakeholders (Interviews E and J). There are obvious difficulties in trying to combine the standardized work routines of local or government officials and the additional value created by diversity and experimentation of mentors. The applied metrics of project performance set by public authorities are also seen as hindering innovation—organizations uniting mentors must hold to the initial conditions and project proposals. If they fail to deliver the set goals—and even if they achieve other, more important ones that were not been listed in the proposal—there is the threat that they have to pay the money back (Interview A).

> If it is set in the proposal that X percent of prisoners find a job after being on the mentoring service, it does not matter if a 100 percent of them do not re-offend—if they are not working, you have failed your project. The financer only sees value in the indicators they have set, nothing else. This brings with it the bluntness of emotions and thoughts. (Interview A)

All of this has implications for the ability of mentors to motivate ex-prisoners to co-produce. As said by a coordinator of the mentoring service,

> "Formalization helps build and maintain something, but it leaves little room for development. This can be seen in government institutions. They seem to be prepared, they know how things are done and act accordingly. In so doing, they have blinders on, which block their sight and prevent them from thinking outside the box." (Interview A)

Consequently, volunteers are confronted both with high expectations and with high restrictions on how to live up to these hopes.

There has to be a degree of freedom of action, because ex-prisoners have a negative stance toward anything official or formal as a reaction to the system that is already highly formalized (Interview E). In principle, the need for non-formality from the side of the prisoners also breeds creativity and innovation in services (e.g., volunteers organize bonfires, give short-term shelter, or even lend money to ex-prisoners on their own initiative, but they also seek professional support, e.g., legal aid and debt management assistance for their mentees) (Interviews B and G), but as the system does not reward or encourage this, it turns into a realm of hidden experimentation that is at maximum discussed between volunteers or participating prisoners themselves. Thus, not all ex-prisoners benefit from these extra services that are highly dependent on the personal network of mentors.

More importantly, the loose coupling of the mentoring service and other support services in the community takes place only due to the social capital of the volunteers and only if and when the contacted professional volunteers—if there are any—have time to contribute. Furthermore, project-based funding has a great influence on these services: "Mentors are funded from projects for specific tasks but it rarely is enough. You always need to do a lot more to achieve any results. So funding and actual effort don't really match" (Interview A). As it is difficult to even define the new services emerging through the social interaction between prisoner and mentor, it is even more inopportune—or so far even impossible—to finance new ideas from project funds if the activities are not stated in the project proposal. Thus, for the Ministry of Justice (the funder), the funding of extra services often means just giving extra for free—this, however, conflicts heavily with the need for accountability in the public-sector setting.

Government's influence and mentors' accountability

Another source of tensions emerges from the application of the traditional formalized accountability mechanisms of the public sector and project governance in the context of co-production. The tendency that mentors generally use unorthodox and tailor-made solutions makes the entire service provision more difficult to control for the government. On the one hand, the personal approach provided by the volunteer mentors creates value not accessible for the government through other means. But, on the other hand, the promotion of too close relationships—outside the scope of the government—with fuzzy financing is frowned upon. Therefore, on the macro level, formal accountability frameworks become a lever to control the relationship. The Ministry is inclined to formalize and standardize the cooperation, and thus has helped draft a semiformal document on work instructions for mentors (largely based on the ministry-approved instructions for probation officers), a code of ethics, and a service standard approved by and uploaded to the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Some of the mentors mentioned that having these guidelines is beneficial (Interview A), which is in line with previous studies on volunteer motivation and expectations (e.g., Gaskin, 2003; Machin & Paine, 2008). Additionally, the Ministry of Justice has introduced a myriad of standardized data collection requirements and specific reporting templates and reimbursement rules, including statistics on clients. It also performs an annual revision and evaluation of the service (Kütt & Surva, 2014). At the same time, volunteers would appreciate much more

freedom and flexibility: in general, they would like to do without reports, bookkeeping, statistics and analyses, which would be in line with to the tailor-made approach of the service itself (e.g., Interviews B and D). As one of the interviewees put it:

> Everything has to be filed under providing solace—that is the category in the tables. Why cannot I be honest and say that we went to a sports club? That was necessary to build a better contact and do something different with my mentee. (Interview D)

As a result, experimentation in service delivery becomes eroded, or more likely, hidden from the formalized accounting system. All the members of the network, including the Ministry of Justice, see the need for this service to help people resocialize after being released from prison. At the same time, formal rules and restrictions limit or complicate the uptake of co-production and social innovation.

Motivation to co-produce

The tensions between specialized approaches, service universality, and standardization cut into the core of co-production—citizens' willingness to do so both from the side of volunteers and prisoners themselves. As the service is voluntary, there is a selection effect connected to it, or as one of the ex-prisoners put it: "You cannot really make a person come to this service, just like you cannot make them change. This need or want has to come from within" (Interview H). Furthermore, prisoners' motivation to participate in the service prior to their release might not be very future-oriented; they just want to fight boredom and bring variation to their daily routine (Interview D). This puts even more pressure on mentors in terms of engaging the prisoners and building a possibility for successful desistance (Interviews C and E).

From the side of mentors, the interviews showed a deeply person-specific need to volunteer depending on personal experiences and intrinsic values—the need to "do good" (Interviews A and B). This, however, is very hard for the government to "create", despite that fact that government is highly interested in increasing the number of mentors and the scale of the service. As this work is done voluntarily and it is scantily compensated, there are not many levers to keep mentors motivated. Moreover, concerns related to formalization make it tougher to motivate volunteers to take unorthodox measures, which would keep prisoners co-producing. In practice, there is a tendency to lose ex-prisoners from the service after 2–3 months of being on the service and after encountering first setbacks. As such, the duty to balance the diverse network and to keep the motivation high rests heavily on the shoulders of regional coordinators of the service, who have to monitor motivation fluctuations and come up with solutions that suit each specific mentor (Interview B). At the same time, mentors are confronted with very different approaches from partners in the network of service delivery—especially prisons, but also the Ministry. Furthermore, as the government intends to finance the service from the EU Social Fund between 2014 and 2018, which increases the need for accountability and bureaucratic pressure, it makes one ask how far the motivation of mentors would carry them.

Discussion

The mentoring service took off in reaction to the limitations of traditional public-service provision, lack of finances, and the low motivation of ex-prisoners to co-produce. Central to the idea behind the mentoring service was that experimentation and the inclusion of motivated citizens could improve outcomes. Although unorthodox and specialized approaches are at the core of the service (i.e., innovation takes place on micro level), the needs for universality and accountability set on meso and macro levels soon created tensions. While a civic organization is the leading partner, it acts in an environment, where the level of trust on meso level (prison staff) is low and there is no power over other (mostly public) stakeholders on macro level. While the co-productive service—and especially hopes for a more effective service—are ingrained in the micro-interactions of individual trust-based relationships, the prison system is built on different and even conflicting core values. Thus, trust-based relationships create apprehension with other partners, who see the need for further formalization due to security and accountability concerns. Dysfunctional power relationships also play a role, with prisons using their semiformal veto power in recommending prisoners for the service or gatekeeping the pool of mentors.

As a cause for concern, one can contemplate whether the pressure toward standardization erodes the volunteers' motivation to participate in the venture. If the intrinsic need to "do good" is taken away and more formal requirements are prioritized, this may lead to the further professionalization of the service with partners who are willing or able to specialize. Moreover, more stringent funding requirement along with the stability and expansion of funds could further promote professionalization. With a more structured approach to the content of the service, benchmarking would suit the formal partners in the network

(municipalities, prisons, the Unemployment Insurance Fund, employers, and NGOs providing different rehabilitation services), but this would take away the added-value of experimentation and tailor-made approaches, and perhaps, more importantly, demotivate prisoners from co-producing.

On the other hand, standardized service would also create expectation for stable funding flows from the public sector. If the government intends to make these services universally available to all with no variation in quality, then increased funding becomes inevitable. Faced with weak operational control, it would be much easier to govern a network of mentors based on benchmarks or market-oriented controls (Hood, Scott, James, Jones, & Travers, 2002, p. 192), but this would increase the demands on the public sector itself (universal coverage and accompanying isomorphism). Furthermore, it changes the trust-based relationship and experimental behavior on the micro level that is at the heart of the change in quality of the service. Given that it is extremely difficult to motivate prisoners to co-produce in the service, almost all successful volunteering mentors use (to a greater or lesser extent) unorthodox methods in motivating prisoner participation.

This situation means that the government is faced with conflicting values and is, at the moment, at an impasse. It can choose between (a) low-cost and a wide geographical coverage of service, but higher uncertainty in service quality based on non-formal relationships, and (b) standardized service, but narrow professional network and possible higher fixed costs and lower trust-based relationships. It is unclear which values will prevail, although the public-sector momentum in prior experience would mean that at some point the government will start to engage the network of mentors through financing if not using coercive power to ensure standardization. Incidentally, these dilemmas are substantive issues that almost all social innovations addressing transformative change will face dealing with scalability and diffusion in public-sector settings.

The current study suggests that the use of volunteering mentors as agents of co-production has some inherent limits in facilitating transformative change and innovation in the public-sector settings. While productive in bringing forth experimentation and new ideas, the diffusion of bottom-up co-production practices is highly difficult due to the very nature of the public sector. And more importantly, the inherent qualities of the public sector that determine the uptake and diffusion of co-production ideas—authority, accountability, legitimacy—create several challenges and problems, which are further leveraged by network settings where co-production practices are often carried out. Instead of positive feedback loops and learning—necessary preconditions for innovation diffusion—one can instead witness something that can be called hidden experimentation: innovative solutions are kept secret from the public and government, leading to broken feedback loops and little learning and change in the system.

Conclusions

With the volunteer mentoring system of ex-prisoners in Estonia, the long-lasting effects of the co-production process in a setting with conflicting values were described. In doing so, the effects that different levels of engagement—micro, meso, and macro—have on the service and its continuity were introduced. The case illustrated that the value added from co-production initiatives may be created on a grassroots level and that the management of the relationships of the involved stakeholders is a precarious affair with antithetical effects. On the one hand, the case demonstrates how the room to manoeuver for experimentation is determined by the very nature of the public sector (i.e., through the attempts to preserve legitimacy, accountability, and authority) and that there are important, albeit paradoxical, mechanisms at play that may facilitate or block the public-sector or social innovation (e.g., finance levels, trust within service "consumer" communities, and the level of professionalization).

On the other hand, the case illustrates the importance of micro-level incentives, motivation, and understanding of the division of roles between different stakeholders, which in transformative co-production is at the very core of quality improvements and innovation. An argument was made that various interests (e.g., financial concerns) may give access to a more democratic participation in service design and delivery, and thus, foster social innovation. Then again, the traditional public-sector values and routines have not disappeared or even changed much during the piloting period of mentoring service and this means that the threat for extra formalization is still in the air and might hinder experimentation and reliance on personal relations. These issues are fundamental to the spread and success of many social, co-production initiatives currently in start-up phases and thus, should be central in all studies concentrating on the sustainability and continued use of co-production. As this is a strong claim to make, future studies on co-production should examine the process in a long-term perspective to expose the possible cyclical nature of providing services to ex-prisoners and co-production more generally.

In addition, one cannot overlook the effects that grassroots level relations, trust, flexibility, and motivation play

in social innovation; hence, further research is needed on the public-sector values, accountability requirements, partnership formulation, and sustainable co-production models, which would take into account the micro-level dynamics underpinning successful co-production. This paper focused on the micro-level incentives and motivations of the co-producing citizens; however, further research is needed on the dynamics surrounding street-level bureaucrats, giving also way to complexities related to coordination of people and networks in a context characterized by differences in identity, goals, and routines of agencies, groups, and individuals.

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Appendix

List of interviews

Interview A. Manager of mentoring service. Interview time 11.07.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview B. Regional coordinator. Interview time 28.08.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview C. Regional coordinator. Interview time 16.09.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview D. Regional coordinator. Interview time 30.09.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview E. Volunteer mentor with prior prison experience. Interview time 16.09.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview F. Volunteer mentor without prison experience. Interview time 30.09.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview G. Ex-prisoner. Interview time 30.09.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview H. Ex-prisoner. Interview time 3.10.2014. Authors' notes and recording.

Interview I. Ex-prisoner. Interview time 7.10.2014. Authors' notes.

Interview J. Ministry-level coordinator of the service network. 10.12.2013. Authors' notes and recording.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Is Volunteering Always Voluntary? Between Compulsion and Coercion in Co-production

Piret Tõnurist[1] · **Laidi Surva**[1]

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Abstract Governments are increasingly eager to involve citizens in co-production of services. They are seen as a substitution or a supplementary resource in service delivery. Citizens' involvement relies heavily on their motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic drivers) to partake in co-production. Taking note from prior debate in the volunteerism literature, the article ties volunteer motivation to the process of co-production and citizen–state interaction. Here the state has contrastive options to motivate citizens' behavior varying between compulsion and coercion. The question is how states' increased engagement and interaction with volunteers affects volunteer motivation and free choice, the main characteristic of volunteerism. To exemplify this, we analyze the motivation behind state engagement in different forms of co-production: volunteering in rescue and police services and in a volunteer program for the unemployed in Estonia. We conclude that using citizens in co-production is rife with controversies that influence the very nature of volunteerism.

Résumé Les gouvernements souhaitent de plus en plus impliquer les citoyens dans la co-production de services. Ils sont perçus comme des ressources de substitution ou supplémentaires pour la prestation de services. L'implication des citoyens dépend largement de leur motivation (facteurs intrinsèques et extrinsèques) à collaborer à la production. S'inspirant de débat antérieur tiré de littérature existante sur le bénévolat, l'article fait un lien entre la motivation des bénévoles et le processus de co-production et l'interaction de l'État avec le citoyen. L'état jouit ici d'options

✉ Piret Tõnurist
piret.tonurist@ttu.ee

Laidi Surva
laidi3011@gmail.com

[1] Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Akadeemia tee 3, 12618 Tallinn, Estonia

contrastantes pour motiver le comportement des citoyens, de la compulsion à la coercition. La question est la suivante : comment l'engagement accru des États et l'interaction avec les bénévoles influencent-ils la motivation de ces derniers et leur liberté de choix, la principale caractéristique du bénévolat? Pour exemplifier ce concept, nous analysons la motivation derrière l'engagement de l'État dans diverses formes de co-production: le bénévolat observé dans les services de sauvetage et de police et celui d'un programme bénévole pour chômeurs en Estonie. Nous concluons que l'appel aux citoyens aux fins de co-production soulève de nombreuses controverses qui influencent la nature même du bénévolat.

Zusammenfassung Regierungen sind vermehrt darum bemüht, Bürger in die Gemeinschaftsproduktion von Dienstleistungen miteinzubeziehen. Sie werden als Ersatz bzw. eine zusätzliche Ressource für die Dienstleistungsbereitstellung betrachtet. Die Involvierung der Bürger hängt stark von ihrer Motivation (intrinsische und extrinsische Anreize) zur Teilnahme an einer Gemeinschaftsproduktion ab. Unter Berücksichtigung einer früherern Debatte in der Literatur zur ehrenamtlichen Arbeit verbindet dieser Artikel die Motivation der Ehrenamtlichen mit dem Prozess der Gemeinschaftsproduktion und der Interaktion zwischen Staat und Bürger. Der Staat verfügt hier über kontrastierende Optionen, die zwischen Druck und Zwang variieren, um das Verhalten der Bürger zu motivieren. Die Frage ist, wie sich die erhöhte Involvierung des Staates und seine Interaktion mit den Ehrenamtlichen auf deren Motivation und freie Entscheidung, das Hauptmerkmal der ehrenamtlichen Tätigkeit, auswirken. Zur Veranschaulichung analysiert man die Motivation für das Eingreifen des Staates in verschiedenen Formen der Gemeinschaftsproduktion: die ehrenamtliche Arbeit im Rettungs- und Polizeidienst und in einem ehrenamtlichen Programm für Arbeitslose in Estland. Man kommt zu dem Schluss, dass der Einsatz von Bürgern in der Gemeinschaftsproduktion mit Kontroversen gespickt ist, die den wesentlichen Charakter der ehrenamtlichen Arbeit beeinflussen.

Resumen A los gobiernos cada vez les entusiasma más implicar a los ciudadanos en la coproducción de servicios. Son vistos como una sustitución o como un recurso suplementario en la entrega de servicios. La implicación de los ciudadanos se basa enormemente en su motivación (impulsores intrínsecos y extrínsecos) para participar en la coproducción. Tomando nota de debates previos en el material publicado sobre el voluntariado, el artículo relaciona la motivación del voluntario con el proceso de coproducción y la interacción ciudadano-estado. En este caso, el estado tiene opciones contrastivas para motivar el comportamiento de los ciudadanos que varían entre la compulsión y la coerción. La pregunta es cómo el aumento del compromiso y la interacción de los estados con los voluntarios afecta a las principales características del voluntariado: la motivación de los voluntarios y la libre elección. Para ejemplificar esto, analizamos la motivación subyacente al compromiso estatal en diferentes formas de coproducción: voluntariado en servicios de rescate y policiales y en un programa voluntario para los desempleados en Estonia. Concluimos que la utilización de ciudadanos en la coproducción está plagada de controversias que influyen en la propia naturaleza del voluntariado.

Keywords Co-production · Volunteering · Compulsion · Coercion · Governmantality

Introduction

During the last ten years, national voluntary service programs have emerged in many countries across Europe—e.g., the UK, Sweden, France, Italy, Germany, and Czech Republic (Haß and Serrano-Velarde 2014). These programs try to change the long-term behavior of individuals and encourage pro-social behavior. Moreover, in the context of welfare liberalism and constrained state budgets, volunteerism is perceived as a source of savings (e.g., Hotchkiss et al. 2014; Haß and Serrano-Velarde 2014). Volunteering can be seen as a low-cost alternative to deliver public services—to 'co-produce' them with citizens (ibid; Lee and Brudney 2009).

Brandsen and Honingh (2016) give a very good overview of the varieties of co-production and its basic elements, including voluntary action. While there are different relationships that can be labeled as co-production, we concentrate on the individual level of co-production—i.e., a process where active citizen participation/effort is required—not the relationship between citizen-led organizations or more broad service providing organizations and the government that can also be described as co-production. Co-production, in the context of this article, is understood as a "relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the work of the organization" (ibid., 431). As such, we focus on citizen involvement in services for which active citizen participation is not inherent, e.g., as is the case with education (successful teaching requires sedulous studying) or healthcare (prescribed treatment has no effect unless the patient adheres to it), but instead, stems from motivation to participate and contribute resources to public service provision (following Bovaird 2007). This enables us to analyze the effect and importance of citizen motivation in co-production, an important factor in understanding the interplay between voluntary, compulsory, and coercive sides of co-production.

This is important as measures such as time banking and state volunteer offices/centers are increasingly used to mobilize citizen input (Collom et al. 2012). Hence, there is a movement from volunteering through government to 'government through volunteering' (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2009). Volunteer action is increasingly becoming part of co-production. Thus, the underlying assumptions are that paid employment and reliant service delivery can be substituted with citizen volunteers and citizens are willing to become 'active participants.' Taking these assumptions into account, the main question guiding this article is what happens to volunteering and volunteer motivation when the state knowingly starts to use volunteers in the co-production of services. This helps us to engage with the debate surrounding the extent the state can build upon citizen involvement in co-production of public services and whether citizens' contribution in service provision can be considered voluntary.

Current academic debate on co-production is starting to tap into the volunteer nature of citizen participation and to draw links to literature on volunteerism, looking if co-production is a subset of volunteering or are there elements of co-production that fall outside volunteering. However, academic debate so far has not gone into depth in exploring both state motivations and mechanisms to engage citizens and the effects of these on citizen participation in co-production. In this article, we try to fill this gap and outline different processes through which governments have been engaging citizens and interchanging public tasks by volunteer action and, in so doing, having to cope with more and very diverse actors. Thus, we draw both on the volunteerism and co-production literature. In the lines of Baines (2004), we find that in different circumstances, citizens may be compelled to continue co-producing (pressed on the high-value nature of the task) or coerced to do so (providing access to other services or status through co-production). We expect that in both cases the core principle of volunteerism—free choice—is affected and, thus, there can be limits to the extent volunteering as part of co-production can be relied upon. To exemplify the discussion, we will present three in-depth case studies from Estonia—voluntary firefighters, assistant police officers, and a volunteer program for the unemployed. Thus, we try to contrast sectors where the intrinsic rewards and time engagement for citizens are high (voluntary firefighters, assistant police officers), to an area where the former are expected to be lower and the co-production targets mainly individual-specific outcomes (volunteer program for the unemployed).

The following sections will outline the significance of governance-beyond-the-state on volunteerism (introducing the change in policy practice) and discuss the nexus of state-led compulsion and coercion and their effects on volunteers. The second paragraph ends with a preliminary model of state–volunteer engagement in co-production. In paragraph three, we outline the findings from our cases. The article ends with the discussion about the implications of the paper, need for further research, and conclusions.

Understanding Co-production: State Engagement with Volunteers

In the previous decades, the new governance research has increased, including a growing significance of ‘governance-beyond-the state’ (Swyngedouw 2005), ‘indirect government,’ or ‘government by proxy’ (Brudney 1990). With this, the state has been withdrawing from direct intervention (e.g., Jessop 2002), making more room and need for volunteering, an interest of third parties and governments in particular (Torre 2007; Haski-Leventhal et al. 2009; Hustinx and Meijs 2011). This has been described as ‘government through volunteering’ (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2009). In reality, it is often more than just volunteers interacting with public and private partners to create public value; a better concept to describe this process is co-production as it accounts for the plurality of actors (Voorberg et al. 2015) and takes into account the organizational nature of citizen engagement in service provision. Thus, governance-beyond-the-state and co-production particularly do not only denote increasing citizen participation, but also the transference of traditional

state functions to third parties, including volunteers (e.g., Eikenberry 2007; Tõnurist and De Tavernier 2016). Engaging volunteers can help advance community partnerships, approach problems in new ways, and, thus, increase the public value created (Phillips 2013; Surva et al. 2016).

Brandsen and Honingh (2016, referring to Joshi and Moore 2004) argue that in the co-production literature, professionals are placed in the role of the losing party and the citizens take priority. However, the state is, in fact, at a power position when engaging with citizens, not least because it has the possibility to implement legislative changes to encourage/oblige (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2009)—or compel/coerce—volunteering. Governments also have their own political agendas (Musick and Wilson 2008; Rochester et al. 2010) and high accountability demands that can influence volunteer action (Surva et al. 2016). Moreover, long-term substitution of paid employment opportunities in the public sector could be seen as a form of exploitation (Mook et al. 2014). Transferring traditional state functions to volunteers is, first, dependent on the interchangeability of paid employment with volunteers; secondly, citizens' motivation to volunteer (or obligation to do so); and lastly the effect states' encouragement of or policies towards volunteers have in the long term for volunteerism and service quality. All these factors are important for the understanding of state–citizen interaction in co-production.

Interchangeability of Paid Labor with Volunteer Action

The first precondition for engaging citizens in public service provision lies with the interchangeability of paid labor with volunteers. This is widely discussed in the context of public, private, and third sectors (Brudney and Kellough 2000; Handy et al. 2008; Chum et al. 2013). Possible interchangeability is based on the assumption that paid labor and volunteering are analogous. Indeed, volunteer roles in organizations are not a priori distinct from those of paid labor: they can be a supplement and a substitution of the former (Netting et al. 2005; Handy et al. 2008).

Nevertheless, there can be legal restriction for changing paid labor with volunteers. Hence, regulation and unionization (protection of paid jobs) are important determinants of interchangeability (Handy et al. 2008). Fields with high levels of professionalization and specialization in which epistemic communities have a lot of power to frame professional issues are less likely to use volunteers and are, thus, less conducive to co-production, because it is more difficult to change the expert-based system (Parrado et al. 2013). Legal liability and high level of accountability can force formalization onto the role of volunteers and with it the sense of autonomy and commitment can be lost (Kreutzer and Jäger 2011; Surva et al. 2016). Consequently, too high expectations and lack of training in high-demand fields can hinder people from volunteering (Machin and Paine 2008). For example, increased time demand and changing government mandates have led to the growing turnover and decrease in the number of voluntary firefighters (Stocker 2004; Yoon et al. 2014). High turnover rates beg to question how long and to what extent volunteers can be relied upon in co-production, which in turn influence the state's capacity to govern and manage service provision.

Furthermore, interchangeability is also affected by the size of an organization and formalization of tasks. Scholars argue that formalization, standardization, and specialization in organizations make it harder to include volunteers (Seippel 2002; Dees and Anderson 2003), while, on the other hand, the more standardized the work, the easier it is to complete it in small blocks and, thus, divide to volunteers (Baines 2004). Nevertheless, larger, more bureaucratic organizations have been found to interchange paid labor with volunteers less frequently due to larger transaction costs (Chum et al. 2013; Mook et al. 2014).

Lastly, the substitution of paid labor with volunteers comes most into play during economic downturns and is highest during financial difficulties and constrained budgets (e.g., Handy et al. 2008). This creates resistance and fear for loss of job opportunities from paid staff towards volunteers (e.g., Gaston and Alexander 2001). While professional–amateur interaction is usually rife with fears of de-professionalization (Nisbet and Wallace 2007), it is especially 'expert' volunteers with relevant know-how and credentials that inspire the most resistance from paid staff (Netting et al. 2004, p. 70). For instance, Phillips (2013) notes that with financial cutbacks in the police force, the organization heads are more inclined to use volunteers for clerical activities, code enforcement, crime prevention, and other low-order maintenance activities. Consequently, interchangeability is usually related to general and customer-related tasks (e.g., Chum et al. 2013), because the cost associated with the former (including employee resistance) is lowest. This does not mean that more complicated tasks cannot be interchanged, but much longer time frames have to be taken into account.

Diverging Motivation to Volunteer: Implications for Co-production

Another important factor in involving citizens in co-production is their motivation to volunteer. People take up volunteering for different reasons (Clary et al. 1992; Rochester et al. 2010). They can be either broadly altruistic or related to the need to fulfill a certain goal. Hence, one can differentiate material, solidarity, and expressive incentives (Alford 2002). Similarly to motivation to volunteer, recent literature on factors influencing citizen participation in co-production (Van Eijk and Steen 2016; Steen 2015) has shown that engagement in co-production processes is also affected by different variables: human capital (socioeconomic variables), social capital (networks), self-centered and community-centered motivations, external efficacy (citizen's trust in government to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement) and internal efficacy (individual's perception of her or his personal competences), and ease of getting involved and salience, i.e., importance of the service to the citizen. All in all, the above characteristics fall to some degree under categories of ability, motivation, and access to co-production (see also Jakobsen 2013). The interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to volunteer influences state engagement with volunteers in a co-production context.

Co-production literature often emphasizes the feeling of ownership as the key to start co-producing (Voorberg et al. 2015). Motivation to volunteer is closely dependent on the community embeddedness the volunteer feels which creates collective action (Lee and Brudney 2009) and is an important factor in the instances

where citizens volunteer to co-produce services. For example, volunteer fire brigades are often strong community institutions and volunteers have a deep commitment to them (Brunet et al. 2001). Thus, civic and other skills (relating to internal efficacy), which are widely mentioned in literature, alone are not sufficient to encourage volunteering: beliefs and social nerve are important as well. In addition, while the intrinsic motivations towards volunteering bring rewards to the volunteers—work enjoyment, 'warm glow' (prestige and respect), and the realization of social preferences (Bruno and Fiorillo 2012)—solidarity goals usually prevail. Consequently, efficacy (combination of internal and external efficacy contributing to the belief that volunteers can make a difference) is a strong determinant of participation in co-production (Parrado et al. 2013). Those motivated purely by altruistic concerns can also engage in informal volunteering without the need for recognition, while strategic reciprocity is more important for those volunteering formally and doing so in non-solidary associations (Manatschal and Freitag 2014) and in a more formalized context of co-production. Hence, attracting intrinsically motivated volunteers may hinge on stressing the increase in social justice and high public value achieved through co-production (Jiranek et al. 2013).

Regarding extrinsic factors—not usually mentioned in co-production literature—volunteers can be motivated by direct individual returns the process brings to them—argument usually derived from the theory of neoclassical and utilitarian economics (Lee and Brudney 2009). Consequently, volunteering can be seen as a behavioral strategy towards skills or social capital acquisition that can lead to, for example, better employment outcomes (Konstam et al. 2015). Volunteers can in effect aspire to paid employment through volunteering (Gaston and Alexander 2001; Whittle 2014). Here we can also speak about transition volunteers, people (e.g., long-term unemployed, disabled people, or ex-prisoners) who re-enter society via volunteering. This is connected to the idea of volunteering as 'active' or 'good citizenship' from governmentality literature—that status in society is received through active participation (Warburton and Smith 2003; Yap et al. 2011). This, in co-production terms, can be controlled through identity building and soft power of the state (e.g., Jerome 2012).

Another aspect that needs to be paid attention to is the question of losing motivation to partake in co-production after fulfilling one's extrinsic goals. The reasons to stop volunteering to co-produce, however, do not have to be symmetric to the motivational factors that motivate people to volunteer (Willems et al. 2012). Thus, recent research has shown that commitment to and experience in an organization is important to remain volunteering (Gazley 2013; Valeau et al. 2013), while commitment to beneficiaries is important to increase the time actually spent on volunteering (Alfes et al. 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that through monetary (extrinsic) rewards it is possible to 'crowd in' intrinsically less motivated individuals, but usually not their counterparts (Fiorillo 2011). On the whole, the more demanding the experience in terms of imposing burden and constraint onto the volunteer (perceived obligation), the less effort volunteers are willing to contribute and the less likely they are to persevere in their efforts (Gallant 2011). For both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in citizen motivation are related to ease of access to

volunteering, so when designing volunteer activities, the process to get involved cannot be too complex or demanding from the volunteer side. Some studies show that moderate compulsory feelings increase positive attitudes towards volunteering (Metz and Youniss 2005; Henderson et al. 2007); however, commitment of these volunteers is usually lower than those given a choice (Beehr et al. 2010). On the whole, long-term effect of compulsory volunteer programs is a debated topic (Warburton and Smith 2003; Henderson et al. 2007; Yang 2013) as it can weaken future volunteer behavior because volunteers generally desire some autonomy (e.g., Stukas et al. 1999; Nisbet and Wallace 2007). This hints at some limits to using volunteers as co-producers of public services: uniformity and continued service delivery may be in conflict with the volunteers' need of autonomy—subjective perception of free will.

State Strategies in Using Volunteers for Co-production: Coercion and Compulsion

The previous discussion has shown that it is not easy to interchange paid labor with volunteerism meaning that citizen engagement in co-production may have its limits. Additional problems are introduced when looking at volunteers' motivation to participate in co-production. Here we bring the interchangeability argument and volunteer motivations discussed above together with state strategies to influence citizens. When co-production is looked at from the perspective of the state—its ability to influence citizens' behavior and their willingness to co-produce—the tools to 'motivate' citizens to act include two opposing options: emphasizing their internal wellbeing, solidarity, and accepted normative values or directing their behavior by sanctions and material rewards (Alford and O'Flynn 2012). In parallel to the former division, we take note from Baines (2004) who argues that unwaged workers in general operate within a continuum of *compulsion* and *coercion*. In this division, volunteers confront coercion, when they fear that neglecting to volunteer will influence their employment or education or other desired outcome hinting at some level of perception of external control, and compulsion, where the person feels compelled to participate due to their intrinsic motivation or a threat to their inner identity as a 'good' citizen or a caring individual if they stop volunteering (e.g., Musick et al. 2000). Intrinsic motivation factors, therefore, can be connected to the feeling of *compulsion* to co-produce. Thus, in specific fields where moral values are high, governments can capitalize on the altruism or belief in efficacy of volunteers (e.g., Carpenter and Myers 2010; Stirling and Bull 2011; O'Meara et al. 2012; Jensen and De Tavernier 2016). This gives the government the possibility to lean on the compulsion of intrinsically motivated citizens to co-produce.

On the other side, there have been calls to make volunteering compulsory and include more citizens in service delivery (for volunteer school programs, see references in Yang 2013; also Jenkins et al. 2008). This can be seen as the domain for *coercion*, where by either sanctions or rewards people are 'motivated' to co-produce. For example, youth as part of 'active citizens' are seen as a resource in voluntary policies towards alleviating social problems and building

up communities, i.e., co-producing social outcomes (see New Labour policies in the UK in Clarke 2005). This is where the soft power of the state comes in play, making it possible to (re-)enter society through volunteering—e.g., volunteer programs for ex-prisoners, the unemployed. It is also possible that government tries to substitute other services connected to risk groups (skill and social capital development) with volunteering. Here, the government can be seen to increase returns from volunteering (civic behavior) while substituting prior social inclusion policies with volunteering. As outlined above, in the case of mandatory volunteer programs, the intrinsic desire to volunteer is most likely not there to begin with and it can actually decrease through the sanctioned behavior, i.e., coercion.

The diverging motivations in co-production that come together from the citizens and state are illustrated in the model presented in Fig. 1. At the moment, we have excluded other actors—the third sector, private companies, etc.—from the model; however, based on their use of unwaged citizen input, they could be fit in the model as state does not have to motivate volunteers to participate directly, and it can also happen through third parties (e.g., as sanctioned behavior through regulation).

To briefly conclude, the model in Fig. 1 shows that citizens in high-value areas may be *compelled* to continue volunteering due to their responsibility to their community, because they feel obliged to fulfill a voluntary contract or because they themselves have invested considerable amount of time and money into their training. On the other hand, people can be *coerced* to volunteer because it gives them access to other services or desired outcomes. Here we can describe it as 'inclusive substitution' to denote the substitution of inclusion and educational services with volunteering. Thus, in the former two approaches, the people who volunteer and their motivations can be considerably different and so the effectiveness of their actions and desire to volunteer habitually or episodically varies (Hustinx 2010, p. 236). Table 1 below describes the relationship between intrinsic rewards and time of engagement (long-term or short-term).

When intrinsic rewards are high, but the needed time of engagement is low (quadrant B), there should not be a need for extra motivation to keep citizens co-producing. However, when the time engagement is more considerable (A), the need to use compulsion to keep citizens co-producing is higher. When intrinsic rewards are low but the time of engagement is high (C), then coercive tactics may be needed—sanctions or rewards—to keep people co-producing. Nevertheless, the government should realize that this does not increase civic engagement in general. When both the time engagement and intrinsic rewards are low (D), one should consider monetary rewards; as the input from volunteers is not extensive to begin with, it might be more effective considering the administration costs to substitute volunteers with paid employees.

In the following section, we will actualize the compulsion–coercion nexus of co-production and its effect on volunteer motivation by looking at three case studies from Estonia.

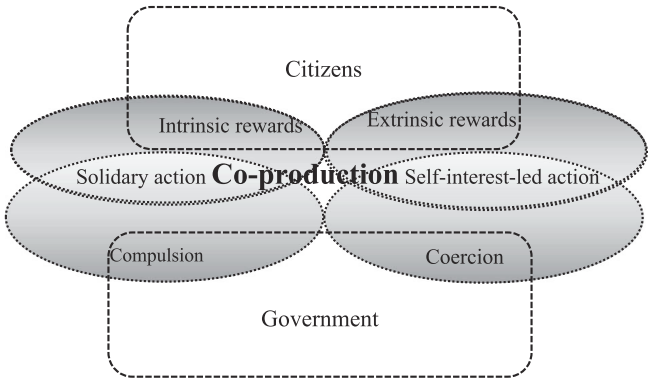

Fig. 1 Citizen–state interaction in co-production *Source* Authors

Table 1 Taxonomy of rewards and time of engagement in co-production

		Time of engagement	
		High	Low
Intrinsic rewards	High	(A) Compulsion Interchangeability low (training costs etc.), long-term engagement required, but solidarity high	(B) Based on free will No extra motivation needed, tasks with higher interchangeability and less time consumption
	Low	(C) Coercion Interchangeability is more difficult (time and training costs); self-interest of law abidance	(D) Not applicable for traditional voluntary action Easily interchangeable tasks, no training costs, possible use of monetary rewards

Source Authors

Method for Analysis

Citizens' engagement in co-production can vary on many different levels (Bovaird 2007). As the article focuses on voluntary citizen involvement in public service delivery as part of the definition of co-production, the cases for analysis from Estonia were selected to represent areas in which the state has a program-based—not ad hoc—approach to volunteers. Also, we look at services where the co-production in question directly produces public services, which not only contributes inputs to an organization that supports the production process indirectly (Brandsen and Honingh 2016). For analysis purposes, we chose services for which citizens make a rational choice to be a part of and will not be looking at services in which co-production is an inherent part of delivery, e.g., public health services. This allows us to draw out similarities and differences in service co-production where citizens make a free choice to join but co-produce either because of state compulsion or coercion and to see which aspects influence their motivation to co-produce. Furthermore, we chose forms of co-production that are based on individual-, group-, or collective-based activities (based on the nature of action

and the level where effects are felt—individual or collective), which can also affect motivation to co-produce (Bovaird et al. 2015). Thus, the article looks at volunteer engagement in co-producing interior security services—volunteer firefighters, assistant police officers—where public value concerns are very high, and analyzes how the state is encouraging volunteer engagement via activation policies—volunteering program for the unemployed. In the first two cases, we deal with user co-delivery of professionally designed services (both in group and more individual input forms) and in the latter case, we look at user/community delivery of (co-)designed services (Bovaird 2007) with more individual-level effects.

As a starting point, we analyzed the strategic documents that guide service provision as well as co-production and volunteer involvement in the respective services. For us to have a clearer view of state policies towards volunteering and get a better understanding of the internal mechanisms, procedures, and peculiarities of each of the service, we also conducted semi-structured interviews (with both inductive and deductive questions; list is provided in the Appendix) with ministry-level policy makers, mid-level managers, service/volunteer coordinators, and also volunteers themselves. For volunteer motivational concerns, we relied on feedback collected by volunteer coordinators. We used the snowball method to some extent, to reach the most knowledgeable experts or most vociferous volunteers in each service, not to limit ourselves only to official spokespersons. However, we cannot fully remove the possibility of bias from the interviews as the most active volunteers and volunteer network managers also work together the closest with public authorities. To minimize this problem, we cross-checked information acquired previously from other interlocutors during the interviews, giving us a chance to find and analyze possible discrepancies or points of conflict. Interviews were anonymized for the purpose of full disclosure.

Estonian State and the Inclusion of Volunteers

A short description of the chosen services—firefighting, policing, and a volunteer program for the unemployed—is provided below:

- *Volunteer firefighters* Volunteer firefighters have been active in Estonia since the 1860s. Throughout the time, they have helped with fire distinguishing and prevention in communities. From the 1990s onward, a professional firefighters system was developed and the volunteer firefighters were consciously side-lined. During the recent financial crisis, however, the regulation of volunteer firefighters has formalized and they have been included again in the state rescue service system. The new Rescue Act came into force in 2010 and it regulates more directly the tasks, rights, and responsibilities of volunteer rescuers. In 2009, the Ministry of the Interior also worked out a concept for the voluntary action in support of rescue services. This document covers various topics to develop voluntary rescue services: the required training for volunteers, machinery and equipment, commando buildings and rooms, system of costs and remuneration, and supporting the development of a volunteer firefighters union. The Estonian Volunteer Rescue Association now holds 96 member

organizations (NGOs). All of these NGOs together run 109 volunteer fire commandos and 29 maritime rescue teams; the total number of volunteer rescuers has reached 2000 people.

- *Assistant police officers* Prior to the Soviet occupation, the Estonian state did not have any experience with volunteer police officers. During the occupation (from 1940 to 1980), community car inspectors (volunteer police officers with limited responsibilities) were initialized. The volunteer car inspectors became the basis for creating volunteer police officers. In 1994, the Assistant Police Officer Act came into force which for the first time set down rules for engaging volunteers in law enforcement, including threat and accident prevention and maintenance of public order. In 2011, the Estonian Assistant Police Officers Association was created with the aim of raising the quality of assistant police officers (APOs), furthering their development, standing for the rights of APOs when liaising with law enforcement organizations, state institutions, and third parties. In accordance with the Act, APOs are representatives of state power whose lawful orders have obligatory force. In the beginning of 2014, there were 810 APOs (Ministry of the Interior 2014).
- *Volunteer work service for the unemployed* Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) started to offer the voluntary work service for the unemployed in 2011. Initial talks about the service coincided the economic crisis of 2008–2009, when a group of NGOs (who later became the Ministry of the Interior's strategic partner for volunteer action and coordinator of the common information portal "Volunteer Gate") approached EUIF to promote volunteering possibilities among the registered unemployed. It took some years to create a contractual service, but by now volunteer work is part of the Employment Program. In addition to the volunteer work service, EUIF also provides a community work service (short, 1- or 2-day volunteer work). The aim of the volunteer work service is to prepare the person for working life, give new skills, and create a 'habit of working' as part of an activation strategy. The unemployed can opt for the service voluntarily in which case they are directed to one of the contractual partners of EUIF in the fields of culture, education, environmental protection, and welfare services (e.g., Hoolekandeteenused Ltd.—a state-owned care service company, NGO Museum Society, Police and Border Guard Board, National Archive, etc.) where the person can carry out his or her volunteer work. The unemployed person can volunteer through the service maximum 4 times a week up to 3 months. EUIF pays a daily stipend and transportation subsidy to the volunteer. Ratio of participation in voluntary work of all registered unemployed was around 1 % in the last 2 years; in comparison with 'competing' services, work practice and coaching for working life are above 4 and 2.5 %, respectively.

Volunteers as a Resource

Volunteer work constitutes about 0.5 % of Estonian GDP (Hinsberg et al. 2012) and approximately 78 % of the workers in civic society organizations are permanent

volunteers (NFCS 2015). By the beginning of 2010s, approximately 82 % of municipalities cooperate with NGOs (Lember 2015) and around 15 % of all volunteers participate directly in public sector organization (Uus et al. 2013). Consequently, the Estonian state has started actively to take over the coordinating role of volunteerism: under the Civil Society Development Plan (2011–2014), the Ministry of the Interior has initialized a strategic partnership with NGOs to coordinate volunteering possibilities and communication strategies and these have been centralized under a single information portal (Interviews G; I). As mentioned above, the road towards the information portal also led to the creation of the volunteer work service in EUIF. Since then, volunteering activities have been further institutionalized into policy documents and reform strategies. The use of volunteer firefighters and APOs is officially stated in the main Guidelines of Estonia's Security Policy (2015–2020). Volunteer work service has its place in the recent large-scale Work Ability Reform and is mentioned in the connected ESF strategy (2014–2020) (Interviews H; I).

The road to more government control of volunteering in the security sector has been gradual. Although volunteers have always been an extra resource, involving them became more systematic since the beginning of 2000s. Before that, volunteers were seen as separate activists (Interview A). In 2002, county governors began to sign agreements with volunteer firefighters to ensure fire safety in local communities. Since 2006, the Estonian Rescue Board signs agreements with volunteers making the coordination of volunteers a state- rather than county-level interest. Today, the aims and objectives for civilian security volunteers (and engaging them) are set in the Ministry of the Interior development plan and state-level strategies, e.g., Guidelines of Estonia's Security Policy. The Ministry of the Interior development plan sets specific targets, e.g., how many hours of volunteering should be expected within a year; how many APOs and volunteer firefighters, their commandos and maritime rescuers should there be; what are the roles and responsibilities of volunteers; what kind of training should they receive; what kind and how much equipment; how many volunteers in law enforcement and rescue should have the competence to independently perform a duty, etc. Many of these targets and connected activities are tied to the goal of increasing the number of volunteers and keeping them motivated to partake in co-production (Agu-Kruusmaa 2014, p. 36). The state has adopted National Guidelines for the Development of Voluntary Rescue Services (2013–2016) and a need for additional guidelines for APOs and maritime rescuers is also recognized.

With systematic action from the side of the government, it is not surprising that the number of volunteers in rescue services has been steadily rising: in 2012, there were 95 local associations and 640 volunteers; in 2014, there were 109 associations and 980 volunteers. The target for 2015 has been set at 1400 volunteer firefighters. With the APOs (and also the voluntary National Defense League), the numbers have also been steadily rising with the exceptional year 2007 when hundreds of people all signed up at once due to the so-called Bronze Night (also known as the April Unrest or April Events) referring to the controversy and riots in Estonia surrounding the relocation of one of the Soviet World War II memorials in Tallinn (the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn). The increase in the number of volunteers after exceptional

Table 2 Inflow to selected EUIF active measures *Source* EUIF (2015)

Period		Public work*	Work practice	Coaching for working life	Voluntary work	Work trial	Community work
2011	Year total	1090	2579	1295	336	470	33
2012	Year total	1006	3781	2673	660	812	158
2013	Year total	433	3625	2483	913	1803	241
2014	Year total	297	3727	3308	804	2407	54
2015	January–June	105	2579	1689	427	1527	173

* Inflow to these measures equals the number of participations

events has been followed by a slowdown of new recruits and also rising drop-out rates in the ranks of APOs that is a relatively new institution. In comparison, the recruitment of volunteer firefighters has been more stable, benefiting from their long history in communities, where they are often seen as a format of public authority even if only in voluntary capacity.

Government incentives to create the volunteer work service have not been so clear-cut nor have there been large external influents popularizing the service *ex prompto*. Although it is clear that volunteers in the program are indirectly used to co-produce public services—many of the contractual partners of EUIF are NGOs engaged with social services or government-owned enterprises tasked with the same—it is not used as a justification for the service. Thus, the unemployed—at least in the eyes of EUIF—are not seen as a resource *per se*. The reasoning is more inclined towards inclusive substitution (Interviews H; I). EUIF sees the volunteering experience as something that helps develop participant's "*soft skills*"—networking, communication, and work habit (Interview I). The service was also associated with the idea of "*finding oneself*"—experimenting with different activities to find the best sector/job fit (Interviews H; I). Coincidentally, the service is inexpensive for EUIF. Voluntary work has only grant-based costs (a very small daily stipend meant to cover lunch costs and a transport allowance) and EUIF does not pay any subsidies to the contractual partners for involving volunteers. In comparison, work practice and coaching for working life constitute, respectively, 12.7 and 21.9 % of the total operating expenses of EUIF (based on 2013 data). EUIF sets yearly optimal targets for the volunteer work service, but the methodology behind the aforementioned is rather intuitive and primarily based on prior demand from contractual partners for volunteers (Interview I). The number of unemployed using the volunteer work service has increased yearly since the starting of the service, although the number of registered unemployed has dropped from 122 thousand in 2011 to 82 thousand in 2014 (Table 2 below).

Volunteers: Substitution or Added Value?

Civilian security volunteering is somewhat extraordinary, because volunteers are given the responsibility for human lives and there is a possibility to endanger one's

own life in the process. This creates a need to provide adequate training and social and other guarantees for volunteers. Hence, their rights and responsibilities have been specifically stated in Estonian law and they do not differ too much from professionals' rights and obligations. Due to the high level of obligation and also restrictions to volunteering, it is difficult to draw the line between professional engagement and volunteering. Although coordinators of police and rescue volunteers at the ministry and local level feel that the increase in volunteer engagement is not caused by layoffs (Interviews A; C; F), there is a noticeable decrease in employed staff in the service areas. With the recent employment decrease in rescue services, a number of commandos have been closed down and in 10+ cases these have been replaced by volunteer commandos. It is difficult for the general public to keep track of these trends above the local community as volunteer commandos operate on a (semi-)professional level and they are integrated into the rescue system; thus, changes are too complex to judge (Interview G). All in all, volunteers in the civilian security sector are becoming a refutable resource and it is somewhat unclear to what extent the government plans rely on volunteers as substitutes for paid labor or sees them as an extra resource (Interviews E; G). Government volunteer coordinators, however, are adamant that volunteers are only seen as a '*bonus*' and they are not used as a countermeasure to austerity (Interviews A; C; F).

Nevertheless, with APOs it was acknowledged that volunteers are used for two broad reasons: to compensate the lack of personnel on a short-time basis, e.g., during vacation periods or to control an unexpected critical incident, and to build trust in the general public as APOs have a closer connection to communities and they are seen as less strict and more trustworthy partners than regular police officers (Interviews C; F). While their responsibilities are similar, an APO must usually be accompanied by an employed police officer. The range of competences of APOs has been widened during recent years, ranging from prevention to border guard duties, protection of crime scenes, migration supervision, etc. (Interview F). This causes confusion and makes APO coordinators ask why they have to do the same work as a professional policeman but without pay (Interview G). Nevertheless, seasonal fluctuations, changes in volunteers' preferences, and lack of sanctions to compel someone to keep on co-producing retain volunteers from substituting paid staff on a large scale in the civilian security sector (Interview C).

There are not many differences between volunteers and employed firefighters either. It is only the '*voluntariness*' that seemingly separates volunteers and paid firefighters (Interview E). It is not uncommon that an employed firefighter is a volunteer firefighter in his/her spare time (Interview A). For example in 2012, 15 % of voluntary firefighters were employed firefighters and this number has probably increased since then (Interview E). In the case of police officers, double duty is not allowed and professional police officers can only volunteer after their employment relation has ended (Interviews C; F). In sum, volunteer firefighters seem to have become a habitual form of volunteering and they take over everyday tasks of professional commandos; APOs, in comparison, represent an additional force that can be employed in ad hoc circumstance. They are also subject to more episodic volunteering, e.g., farmers increasing hours during wintertime or some people

participating especially during summer when the flow of tourists and also petty crime is higher (Interview C). Nevertheless, the use of APOs has become more systematic: there are local coordinators, a separate budget for training volunteers and developing ways to engage them into everyday practices (Interview B).

In the case of the volunteer work service, the substitution effect is more layered. Firstly, the state has used volunteer work for skill development for the unemployed, i.e., inclusive substitution. Hence, one can argue that volunteer work is a substitute for other services that could develop the same abilities [the interviewed also referred to '*parallel*' or '*competing*' services during the interviews (Interviews H; I)]. At the same time, volunteer work can also give '*emotional value*' to the unemployed: work confidence, feeling of being needed, or the avoidance of stigma associated with other activation measures (Interview I). This is the service substitution side, but a case can be made for traditional forms of substituting paid work with volunteers, namely in organizations actually providing the volunteer places EUIF mediates. Both EUIF and the Ministry of Social Affairs have tried to avoid employment substitution by specifying in the contracts signed between EUIF and partner organizations the tasks that can be given to volunteers. EUIF consultants interview the service participants and supervision is set up to monitor the organizations (Interview I). Nevertheless, there has been some critique from the state volunteer network to that regard and EUIF itself has had to terminate or decline contracts due to possible substitution of paid employment (Interview H). While policy makers were clear that the volunteering experience was different from other similar activation services (e.g., work practice, coaching for working life), they did not see it negatively if the service was used for a self-serving purpose, motivated by extrinsic reasoning (the unemployed using volunteering as an access point to certain organizations and, in effect, paid employment) (ibid.).

Interaction Between State Policies on Co-production and Motivation to Volunteer

Previous sections have shown that the state has become more reliant on volunteers in creating and providing services. As was stated by one of the interviewed policy experts: "*there is no need to enlarge the state as an end in itself, when there is a resource available, i.e. people that feel the need to be involved in service provision, feeling the need to give their share to the community*" (Interview F). This naturally presents the government with a problem—how to keep this 'need' alive; how to keep volunteers co-producing. Thus, we need to look at what motivates people to volunteer and what has the state done to support and encourage sustained volunteering.

To start with, volunteer firefighters and APOs have been found to be highly intrinsically motivated (although there has been a dip in APO numbers during 2011–2012 as the more ad hoc, emotionally motivated volunteers who joined after the 2007 riots have quit). Some volunteers have a calling which was especially apparent in the case of professional firefighters, who took a 'double job,' thus, volunteering on their free time [option legally not available to police officers "*expected to be policemen 24/7*" (Interview D)]. In these two fields, there is a

noticeable "*feeling of commitment*" (Interview D) or "*public responsibility*" (Interview D; F) that starts from the need to guarantee safety for the family and home, neighbors, relatives, friends, and acquaintances all the way up to securing the community at large (Interview F). On the flip side, this also means that APOs and volunteer firefighters can start to feel as "*prisoners*" of the community (Interview E), because volunteers cannot stop their activities: they feel that the community security depends on them. The obligation and the related inner compulsion to continue volunteering may be especially high for firefighters in regions where the professional commandos have been disbanded, while APOs are still used as an extra resource. Thus, there are volunteers among firefighters, who feel that if they do not participate, community safety will suffer (Interview E). By cutting down professional rescue services and placing a high level of responsibility onto the volunteers, the government has probably increased the feeling of compulsion. It might lead to the volunteers feeling like they are being used as "*cheap labor*" and that in turn can lead to a considerable demotivation to volunteer (Interview A). The state, however, keeps assuring that it has never been about using people, rather than giving the interested people an opportunity to participate (Interviews A; B; C; D; E; F). "*No-one can be forced to become an assistant police officer or volunteer firefighter*" (Interviews F). However, it is probable that the level and quality of public service has decreased due to the increased reliance on volunteers, but it is not visible, because risks are spread and citizen awareness is low.

> I guess there are houses that burnt down, because the volunteer fire brigade has a machine that is too old to get to the scene on time/…/State should be more honest in saying how many paid staff they can actually employ and what are the tasks of volunteers. And then give the necessary resources for them for their houses and machines—at the moment they are looking for funds themselves and this is not reasonable. (Interview G)

At the same time, trained/expert volunteers—e.g., firefighters whose time and training demand is very high—would like to have more core responsibilities to maintain their motivation to continue volunteering (Interviews A; E). However, the more specific tasks volunteers acquire, the more control and responsibility there is from the state—diminishing also the freedom to choose one's activities (Interview E). This, for some experts, conflicts with the volunteer nature of the activity by over-professionalizing tasks and demands (Interview A). Thus, the most important issue in volunteer engagement in civilian security appears to be the need to match volunteer expectations and the actual responsibilities given to them by the state (Interviews A; B; D; E; F). There are talks of giving more responsibilities to volunteers, but this—at least in our interviews—was only brought out in the context of matching volunteers' intrinsic need to take up responsibility (Interviews B; D; E; F). At the same time, the need for volunteer action is not the same across country (e.g., being lower in densely populated areas). Hence, volunteers in some instances want to participate more than the state is ready to accommodate (Interview E) and this can become an obstacle in maintaining their motivation to participate.

The importance of flexibility was brought out in many interviews (Interviews A; D; E; F). As one of the interviewees said about volunteers: "*You cannot have them*

under-occupied; just as well you need to see that they are not overloaded with responsibilities" (Interviews A). The Ministry of the Interior is looking for options to make volunteering in alternative ways more convenient (Interviews E; F). As fire prevention is by now showing good results, there are already fire commandos working only seasonally, at weekends or when they are not attending their regular jobs, but as mentioned above, there are also 24/7 voluntary commandos with their own commando building, fire truck, and all the necessary equipment (Interview E). Furthermore, volunteer firefighters can participate either as an individual firefighter, a member of a volunteer fire department, reserve rescue team (only help out during major catastrophes, oil leaks, forest fires, etc.), or as a supporting member (ibid.).

Bringing in more volunteers means developing better management systems to accommodate the needs and requirements of volunteers (Interview E). As the government has become to see volunteers in the inner security sector as an integral part of state service provision, it requires a more strategic approach—this also means that volunteer coordinators are expected to become more qualified and take up key tasks in keeping volunteers motivated (Interviews E; F). While intrinsic motivational factors are important in volunteering for security services, there are also extrinsic motivational factors at play as volunteers tend to create active social groups (Interview E) and some volunteers test the fit of the job in the volunteering process before starting studies to become a professional (Interviews B; D). Acknowledgement of volunteer input next to paid staff is also deemed important (Interviews B; E; D). Currently, this ranges from joint receptions and award ceremonies with paid staff to official uniforms or access badges to police or fire department for volunteers.

In comparison, the motivational factors for the volunteer work service seem to be different. At least from the perspective of why the state has created the service: the idea is to play on extrinsic motivational factors of the unemployed volunteers (skill development, networking, etc.) and the role of the service in civic society is rather downplayed (Interview H). At the same time, it was very striking how little policy experts actually knew about the target group of the service and their motivational factors. As all EUIF services are need based, the need for the service is determined by the local EUIF consultants in discussion with the unemployed person. As only very broad descriptive statistics are collected regarding the characteristics of the unemployed participating in the voluntary work service, it is difficult to say substantively how the participants differ from the average user of activation measures. There is only very general background info based on education (e.g., in 2014, 38.4 % of the participants had a higher education and 38.5 % had a high school diploma), duration of unemployment, and age of participants. So, while all policy experts seem to agree that the service would benefit the youth most, voluntary work is primarily taken up by 25+ age group. Furthermore, the gender concentration in service uptake is striking: in 2013, 77.4 % of the 913 participants were women (during the period, male unemployment rate was 9.1 % and female unemployment rate was 8.2 %). This is not the case in comparable services. On average, 33 % of the people who have participated in the voluntary work service in between 2011 and 2014 have been long-term unemployed. As EUIF is more concerned with skill development and re-entry to the labor market, information

about if and how service participants continue volunteering is not collected (Interview I). Thus, policy makers do not know how intrinsically motivated the participants are and how the target group systematically differs from the average unemployed person. Consequently, EUIF does not specifically know how to motivate people to take up the service nor was the benefit of the volunteer work service empirically evaluated. Largely, the service seemed to be demand directed.

Some coercive elements in service provision were noted, however, especially in terms of service users completing the set-time voluntary work. First, after the unemployed agreed to take up voluntary service through EUIF, it was added to the individual job search plan (seen as a contract between EUIF and the unemployed person). While it was possible to interrupt the voluntary service and change the plan if the work did not fit the volunteer, EUIF was unable to evaluate how and in which cases it was used—e.g., service participant finding a job or the volunteer work being unsuitable (Interview I). Furthermore, as part of the procedure the consultant contacts the organization where the volunteer participated and the progress of the person was evaluated. All of these factors can add pressure on the service user to continue volunteering, even if volunteer work is not compulsory nor interrupting it directly sanctioned. Furthermore, it is clear that apart from the interaction between the local consultant and the unemployed person, intrinsic motivation to take up volunteer work was not discussed or prioritized on the policy-making level. Hence, it is not surprising that different NGOs have critiqued EUIF and questioned the true voluntary nature of the service (Volunteer Forum 2014).

Discussion and Conclusions

In the theoretical part, we built a model of co-production concentrating on state–citizen interaction and why/how both the state and citizens engage in the process. First, we argued that states could, by targeting high-public value areas and 'playing' on the salience aspect of volunteer motivation, use compulsion to co-produce; and second, in engaging risk groups through volunteering, also coercion can be applied. The first taps into the intrinsic motivation to volunteer and the second uses extrinsic motivational factors, i.e., self-gain. Indeed, our empirical research so far indicates that the state moves between the continuum of compulsion and coercion when engaging volunteers, depending on the nature of the service and the needs or preferences of volunteers. It comes down to the question if the state is doing it purposely; if the state indeed sees volunteers as a resource not just a manifestation of civic action and appeals to their motivation to keep them co-producing or is it very specific to the field of engagement. In the Estonian case, some signs of purposeful action could be identified. Furthermore, we saw that citizens' motivation to co-produce may entice government efforts to promote co-production as such (as in the case of volunteer firefighters). However, both citizens' high motivation and participation rates, or lack thereof, can influence governments to increase efforts to promote co-production among citizens. What is necessary to understand is that specifically motivated citizens can assign themselves to areas with high or low government engagement depending on what motivates them to volunteer. Hence,

due to motivation and especially continued motivation to volunteer—affected by government actions itself—states can have a limited pool of people they can reach for co-production purposes in different fields and types of co-production. This, in combination with extrinsic motivational factors, has not been thoroughly discussed in co-production literature and should be studied in greater detail.

In civilian security, the state seems to capitalize on the intrinsic motivation of people involved making also professionals in the field contribute to volunteer activities—thinking back on the taxonomy presented in Table 1, volunteer firefighters belong to quadrant A (high time demand; high intrinsic rewards) and the assistant police officers are between quadrants A and B, because the time engagement is not as high. While in both cases the formal process was initiated by cutbacks in the field and introducing more flexibility into planning the working hours of professions, the additional value of co-producing with citizens has been noted. Volunteers in the field are more approachable to local communities and, thus, work on prevention and crime detection becomes easier. This also increases obligations of volunteers as the state wants to maximize the returns from their engagement. However, there is a limit to the obligation the intrinsic motivation of volunteers can endure. Thus, the government is on a narrow tightrope between trying to secure the maximal performance from volunteers—especially volunteer firefighters—and widening the responsibilities too far and, thus, demotivating their partners.

On the side of the volunteer service for the unemployed, state motivation has been totally different: it is more connected to the inclusive substitution defined above. Because volunteer engagements differ, also motivational factors behind volunteering differ according to EUIF consultants among the unemployed in the program. Thus, in terms of the volunteer experience it can reside in all of the quadrants—A, B, C, D—in the context of the taxonomy presented in Table 1. At the same time, because the time engagement is relatively low, it can in reality be placed more in the right part of the division (quadrants B, D), where the time engagement is low, but the existence of intrinsic rewards can vary. The state itself is very ambivalent about its activities and can still be seen as testing the extent of the service. As the service does not feature high on the budgetary agenda (the costs associated with the service are minor and also the number of participants compared to other services is lower), it has not been thoroughly evaluated. However, it is a layered argument. Beyond the EUIF–volunteer connection, the volunteering unemployed are to at least some degree used to co-produce public services. Furthermore, the state remains in control of selecting the organizations it partners with, decreasing the possibility of free choice of volunteers. While at the moment the service is at the expansion stage and only a few selective moments (also due some exploitation concerns) have occurred, partnering with EUIF can become much more popular for NGOs in the future. As such, EUIF itself is not actively looking for partner organizations any more. It is easy to see the social value of the service for both the government (in terms of cost saving and extra labor) and also the unemployed person if it does help reach gainful employment. Nevertheless, the core aspect of free choice in volunteering may be considerably affected.

Consequently, using volunteers in co-production—be it civilian security- or person-specific social outcomes—is rife with complicated issues that also influence the very nature of volunteerism. When states become invested in volunteer retention, they need to pay attention to various motivational factors of volunteers. The state can utilize incentives, but also sanctions to keep people involved, playing on the continuum of compulsion and coercion of volunteers. In a way, coercion is easier to apply, and it only requires addressing people's extrinsic rewards, which keeps the measures (carrots and sticks) more straightforward. This makes it questionable if it is indeed in accordance with the idea of volunteerism as participants can clearly receive direct (albeit non-monetary) remuneration and their own calling to volunteer is not clear. At the same time, sticks and carrots do not seem to work in the context of high level of engagement where intrinsic rewards are high—look back to "State strategies in using volunteers for co-production: coercion and compulsion" section and the taxonomy of volunteer action in Table 1. Thus, governments have to balance the need for high levels of professionalization, which requires intrinsic motivation, and engaging people who can be extrinsically motivated but who also are willing to invest less of their time. Our cases showed that the rewards and new value created through the use of volunteers are probably highest in areas where volunteers are intrinsically motivated. Volunteers in high-value fields also feel compelled to engage, but it is clear that governments cannot raise the expectation and obligation too high as it becomes demotivating. Hence, it becomes questionable if it is actually possible to increase citizen input in co-production in high-public value areas or to reach population groups in most need through co-production if relevant motivational factors are not there. These issues, especially in a long-term perspective, need to be studied in much more detail in future research. Especially, as it is difficult to discern the effect government involvement has on volunteers' motivation in a case study-based analysis, it is very difficult to fully isolate the effect from other potentially important variables and determine causality behind different processes (as governments' efforts to spur on co-production result from both high and low levels of citizen engagement and there is a high self-selection effect of citizen participation). Thus, the current study is not without its limitations, but it introduces a new continuum from the perspective of the state when analyzing citizen input in co-production—namely, the perceived compulsion and coercion of volunteers.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Appendix

List of interviews (in alphabetical order)

1. Advisor on Volunteers (firefighters), Estonian Rescue Board (30.01.2015, Tallinn)
2. Chief Specialist for the Employment Department, Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs and Adviser for the Employment Department, Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs (previous Voluntary work coordinator in EUIF) (30.07.2015, Tallinn)
3. Assistant Police Officer in Eastern Prefecture (4.02.2015, Jõhvi)
4. Coordinator for Assistant Police Officers in Western Prefecture (6.02.2015, Pärnu)
5. Head of the volunteer movement, Kodukant, the Estonian Village Movement, (10.06.2014, Tallinn).
6. Coordinator for Assistant Police Officers in Eastern Prefecture (4.02.2015, Jõhvi)
7. Adviser for the Rescue and Crisis Management Policy Department, Estonian Ministry of the Interior (25.02.2015, Tallinn)
8. Deputy Head, Department of Services, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and Chief Specialist, Department of Services, Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (14.08.2015, Tallinn)
9. Adviser for the Public Order and Criminal Policy Department, Estonian Ministry of the Interior (20.02.2015, Tallinn)

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Publication III

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RESEARCH PAPERS

Maintaining the Ideals of Co-production During Rapid Digitalisation: A Comparative Case Study of Digital Restorative Services in Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Portugal

Laidi Surva[1]

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Abstract With the exceptional COVID-19 circumstances in early 2020, public service co-production went through a push towards digitalisation. Using normalisation process theory as the basis for analysis, the article looks at the immediate effects of digitalisation on restorative practices, which is a co-produced approach to delivering justice. A comparative case study conducted in Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Portugal showed that digitalisation meant a more directive role for the mediators and more responsibility for the citizens in organising the service context. The process became more business-like, which put some integral aspects of restorative justice at risk, such as trust building and feeling connected. The launch of digital restorative services depended more on service providers' readiness to try digital solutions and less on service experience before digitalisation.

Keywords Co-production · Restorative justice · Digitalisation

Introduction

Public service co-production is an ever-evolving concept, closely context bound and highly dependent on the parties involved. It is a multi-faceted and relational process where end-user engagement is integral to service effectiveness (Radnor & Osborne, 2013). With the exceptional COVID-19 circumstances in early 2020, public service co-production went through a push towards digitalisation and the role of online applications became critical in ensuring service continuity. Carroll and Conboy (2020) argue that technology-driven practices will form a part of 'the new normal' and organisations need to normalise the use of technology to accomplish service goals, possibly resulting in long-lasting effects on public service co-production. Even before the pandemic, it had been stated that there is a need for further research into the interplay of co-production and digital technologies (Cordella & Paletti, 2018). One avenue, which has not been studied, is the digitalisation of service co-production inherently reliant on eye-to-eye contact and citizen participation. Restorative practices, which by their nature require physical interaction and active participation, offer a unique opportunity to understand how digitalisation influences the ability of service professionals, individuals and the community to contribute to highly interactive and sensitive public services such as restorative justice. Showing what happens to restorative practices when they are co-produced digitally can shed light on the consequences of abrupt digitalisation of human connection-dependent service processes, which the digital co-production literature so far has not focused on.

Restorative justice is a way of approaching a conflict or crime by actively involving the effected parties—the

✉ Laidi Surva
survalaidi@gmail.com

[1] Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Akadeemia tee 3, 12618 Tallinn, Estonia

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victim, the offender, and the community—in order to repair harm (Chapman & Törzs, 2018; Van Ness & Strong, 2010) through practices like victim–offender mediation[1] or restorative conference.[2] In essence, it is a co-produced approach to delivering justice, with personalisation woven into it for the offender and the victim (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2020). Like other services in 2020, restorative practices switched to digital channels. Restorative practices require active citizen participation in the co-production process (Daly, 2016; Sherman et al., 2005), but due to COVID-19, face-to-face meetings became highly restricted. However, with strict movement restrictions raising stress levels in communities, there was imminent need for conflict resolution. This raised the question whether digitally provided restorative practices were similar in nature and effectiveness compared to analogue services.

In order to understand the immediate effects of digitalisation on co-produced justice and the future prospects for digital restorative practices, an explorative case study was conducted in Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Portugal. As a new approach to analysing considerable changes to co-production of services, normalisation process theory (NPT) (May & Finch, 2009) was used to map the process of change that took place due to rapid and unplanned digitalisation. NPT is a framework that helps to understand key mechanisms behind normalisation, which is a process of implementing, embedding and integrating new practices into routine work (May & Finch, 2009).

Examining this case study could strengthen the wider discussion on using digitalisation in service co-production settings where (a) the change for digital channels is not voluntary and (b) where the nature of the service does not support going digital. This is an avenue not explored so far. Considering that online restorative practices are a recent phenomenon and there are not much data available, the article cannot provide far-reaching conclusions or in-depth analysis on long-term impacts; however, it can shed light on the emerging processes taking place when digitalising a very sensitive co-produced service. In short, the article aims to answer the following research questions:

- What were the immediate effects of digitalisation on co-producing restorative services?
- How were the digitally mediated practices normalised while safeguarding the fundamentally co-productive nature of restorative justice?

As far as the author knows, it is one of the first scholarly attempts to explore the immediate effects of an abrupt shift from face-to-face to digitally mediated co-production process in a highly sensitive field. The article begins with explaining the notion of co-production in the context of restorative justice, outlining some possible effects of digitalisation and introducing the framework of NPT. Next, a case study is presented to illustrate how new restorative justice practices were embedded into the emerging context in four European countries. The article concludes with an analysis of the empirical evidence and an interpretation of the findings.

The Multi-faceted Phenomenon of Public Service Co-production and Restorative Justice

Co-production of public services has been a buzzword for decades, describing the changed nature of relations between organisations and people outside the organisation. According to Loeffler and Bovaird (2020), citizens' role in public service co-production has evolved from the role of a 'citizen' in classic public administration to the role of a 'customer' under New Public Management and then towards a 'partner' in the era of public governance. In the context of this article, the definition by Brandsen and Honigh (2016: 431) serves best to explain service co-production: "a relationship between a paid employee of an organisation and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the work of the organisation". In co-production, citizens and communities provide their ideas, time, skills and other resources (Bovaird, 2007; Verschuere et al., 2012) and service users play a key role in the outcomes of the service process (Tuurnas et al., 2014). For some government services, involving citizens in co-production is a core feature of value creation and an inherent characteristic of service provision, i.e. to receive a service is to co-produce (Alford, 1998; Fledderus & Honigh, 2015). Especially with regard to prolonged, complex services, customer capabilities, understanding of service requirements and perceived self- and provider efficacy are key determinants of success (Spanjol et al., 2015). On the other hand, co-production can lead to a blurring of responsibility and accountability, higher transaction costs, reinforced inequalities, putting pressure on vulnerable service users, or co-producers misusing their role (Steen et al., 2018). In short, public service provision can be seen as a move from services *for* the public to services *by* or *with* the public (Bovaird &

[1] Victim-offender mediation is a process that allows victims and offenders to engage in a mediated discussion in a safe and structured setting in order to agree on how justice should be delivered after a crime has taken place.

[2] A restorative conference is a structured meeting between offenders, victims and both parties' family and friends. The aim is to discuss the consequences of the crime and decide how best to repair the caused harm. Restitution is agreed upon and participants often also see that the agreement is carried out.

Loeffler, 2012), which means that expected outcomes rely on citizens' input in the co-production process.

Restorative practices are inherently co-productive, requiring active participation of all parties. Looking at restorative services through a co-production lens helps to pinpoint properties that are necessary for achieving service outcomes like repairing harm, restoring relationships, supporting victims and taking responsibility for the caused harm (Bolitho, 2015; Sherman & Strang, 2007). In the case of restorative justice, the only formal 'service' provided is facilitating the discussion between the involved parties, thus creating service value (Willis & Hoyle, 2019). For restorative practices to have meaningful impact, the affected parties have to participate actively and without compulsion, be motivated and supported throughout the process, understand and accept their role in the process (Chapman, 2016). There has to be a trustful and safe environment supporting engagement (Bolitho, 2017). It is important that a professional facilitator assists parties (Bolitho & Bruce, 2017), ensuring that the meeting is safe for all and that everyone has a chance to express themselves and to be heard (Bolitho, 2017). Much of this relies on body language, meaningful silence and eye contact (Chapman, 2016).

In short, restorative practices denote a type of service co-production that relies on human contact, mutual trust and respect, open and honest dialogue between parties, facilitated by an objective, trained outsider. The following section looks at a new layer in these types of services, i.e. digitalisation.

The Possible Effects of Digitalisation on the Co-production of Restorative Justice

Through the process of digitalisation, traditional forms of services are replaced or supported by digital options (Soto-Acosta, 2020). Digitalisation can have a three-fold effect on co-production (Lember, 2018). Indirectly, digitalisation makes it easier to exchange information or provide support functions such as identifying oneself online. It can also transform co-production by introducing new practices or adding a digital element to traditional services. Lastly, digitalisation can replace traditional co-production practices, e.g. by using sensors or algorithm-based decision-making models instead of working directly with service users. Digitalisation is often seen as something normative, a positive push towards accessibility, efficiency and innovation (OECD, 2016). Previous research on digital co-production has focused on the strategic aims of voluntary digitalisation, its long-term effects and possible impacts for future developments in service design and production (Lindgren et al., 2019).

This article focuses on how digital channels transform service processes, diminishing the physical presence of the service provider and the user in the value creation process (Osborne et al., 2014; Rantala & Karjaluoto, 2017). However, it does so in the context of an unexpected and possibly objectionable push towards digitalisation of highly sensitive, fundamentally co-productive services where the lack of human contact is not desirable or can even be detrimental. Due to the pandemic, many organisations introduced 'tech-driven' practices in an unprecedented and time-pressured manner (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). The transformation process was not strategically initiated, many of the changes were reactive by nature (Iivari et al., 2020), and due to time constraints, there was no reflection on the long-term sustained use of the new practices created as short-term solutions (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). The aim of this article is to take an explorative look into how initially undesirable changes are embedded in routine processes to ensure service continuity and preserve the co-productive nature of the interactions.

Digital services are usually associated with economic savings, higher productivity, better service quality, increased transparency, access to services, customer satisfaction, citizen participation and empowerment (see also Gelderman et al., 2011; Madsen & Kræmmergaard, 2016; Taherdoost, 2018). However, there are ethical and social implications to consider (Seetharaman et al., 2020). For example, digitalisation can lessen the control citizens have over the results of the services they are contributing to (Breit & Salomon, 2015). There are also worrying signs of 'technological solutionism' (Morozov, 2013) whereby all social phenomena are defined as quantifiable problems 'solvable' with a technological solution. Furthermore, digitalisation can lead to a new distribution of responsibilities, risks and potentially disruptive effects, not to mention the extra work needed to ensure the high quality of a service provided at a distance (Pagliari, 2007; Vikkelsø, 2005). Digital channels are more vulnerable to breakdown of communications, conflicts, power struggles and mistrust (Sumathipala, 2020). This becomes crucial in restorative services that are dependent on showing and reading emotions, being open to vulnerability and honest responses. There, cognitive-based trust is important, and this develops through social cues and impressions (Turesky et al., 2020). While digitally mediated social environments offer much for communicating with others who are physically distant, they have limitations regarding the manner in which information is transferred, allowing less possibilities for nonverbal symbolic gestures (Carter & Asencio, 2019), but these help to convey emotional expressions, which is a big part of communication (Van Kleef, 2009).

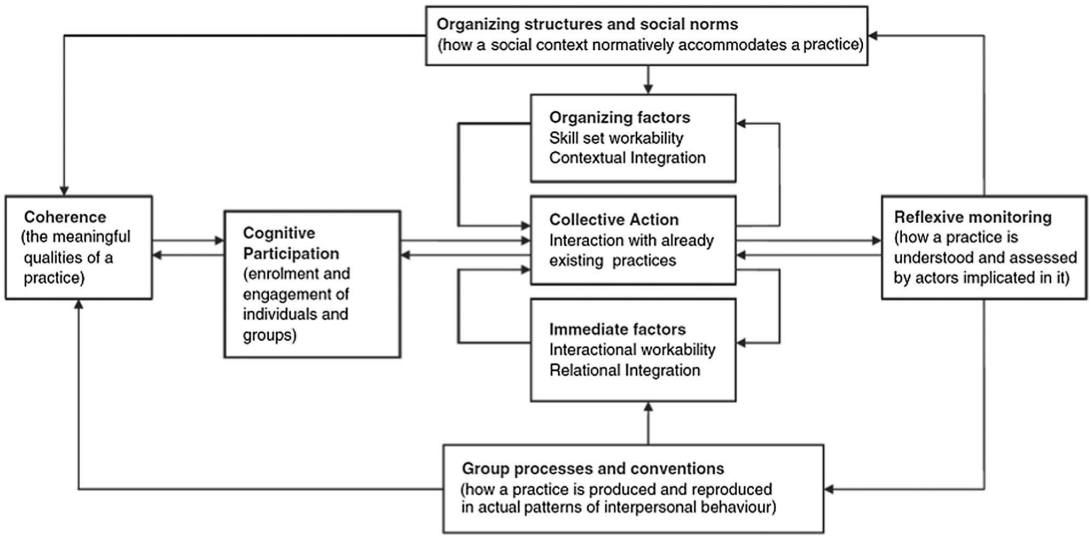

Fig. 1 Model of the components of normalisation process theory (May & Finch, 2009)

Normalisation of New Digitalisation Practices

In order to map empirically the process of change in switching to digitally mediated restorative justice, the article follows the NPT framework. The components of the NPT were used to pinpoint the immediate effects digitalisation had on the co-production process itself as well as the roles that facilitators and citizens played in setting up and conducting online restorative meetings. NPT "is concerned with the social organisation of the work (implementation), of making practices routine elements of everyday life (embedding), and of sustaining embedded practices in their social contexts (integration)" (May & Finch, 2009: 538). Using the model proposed by NPT to map out the steps taken to digitalise restorative justice can help understand how the abrupt digitalisation of restorative services was embedded in the routine service processes. NPT addresses the necessary factors for successful implementation and integration of new practices into routine work (Murray et al., 2010), and in this article, it is used as a contextual framework to explore and understand the digitalisation of restorative practices. It helps to analyse how and why digital restorative justice becomes a normal practice, or why it does not or should not. NPT as a framework posits that new practices become embedded in routines and integrated in the surrounding context as a result of people working, individually and collectively, to implement them. Implementation is operationalised through four mechanisms: coherence, cognitive participation, collective action and reflexive monitoring (see Fig. 1 for a schematic overview of the components of NPT).

Coherence refers to the meanings and competencies that hold the practice together, enabling people to share and enact it. *Cognitive participation* reflects actors' engagement: initiation of the new practice, enrolment in it and legitimation in relation to existing practices. *Collective action* refers to the activities used to enact the new practice. On the one hand, collective action is influenced by organising structures and social norms, and on the other, by group processes and conventions. *Reflexive monitoring* involves formal and informal judgements about the utility and effectiveness of a new practice. Reflections have an effect on social norms and group processes that, in turn, shape practice and coherence.

Method

In order to understand how digitalisation affects the co-productive nature of restorative services, an explorative abductive case study was conducted in Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Portugal. The case study approach enables us to obtain in-depth understanding about an issue or phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 2002). These countries belonged to a group of 15 European countries, which in 2020 started to coordinate and exchange their restorative justice experiences during the pandemic. The four countries were selected based on two variables: how established were the restorative services (relatively old vs new services) and how digitally experienced were the countries

Table 1 Case study country selection

	Highly digitalized	Less digitalized
Long history of restorative services	Finland	Ireland
Short history of restorative services	Estonia	Portugal

according to international benchmarks[3] (see Table 1). The aim was not to explain the differences or similarities between these countries, but to detect the emerging effects of digitally mediated and co-produced restorative practices in contextually different settings. Choosing countries with different backgrounds in terms of restorative practices´ history and level of digitalisation gives a more varied insight into the normalisation process, thus possibly providing a more general overview of the effects of digitalisation on service co-production.

Data were gathered in three phases (see Table 2). First, the author observed online meetings of the European Group for Restorative Justice in 2020. The group met once a month between April and July 2020 and included over 30 European restorative practitioners from 15 countries. The meetings focused on four main topics: necessary changes in practice to go digital (April), restorative practices in the context of COVID-19 (May), supporting staff in returning to contact services (June), and further developments in service design and staff training on online services (July). The author took notes of each meeting and systematised the information to note down reoccurring themes, keywords, challenges and interesting anecdotes, which fed into the next phases of data collection. These were then used to come up with questions and themes for country interviews, enabling systematising the information provided during the interviews (see Table 3).

Secondly, two phone interviews were held with the Estonian mediation service manager in June and August 2020 to reflect on the practical changes made in the co-production process. The manager's input came from co-vision meetings[4] she held from April to July with 19 volunteer mediators. Information obtained during the phone interviews was categorised according to the components and their sub nodes of NPT. Lastly, in February and March 2021, based on the insights gathered in previous steps, group and individual semi-structured interviews were held with country representatives from the selected four countries. From each country, at least one of the people interviewed had taken part in the European group meetings. The interviews were carried out over Zoom or Skype and were recorded and transcribed. The information was coded to match the four components of NPT. Grouping reoccurring themes under the components of NPT allowed to map out the digitalisation process and find similarities and differences between countries, and come up with common changes experienced compared to analogue restorative practices. Altogether, next to observing four European Group meetings, 12 restorative justice professionals were interviewed for this study.

The author acknowledges that interviewing only service professionals (mediators) and not citizens sets limitations on drawing conclusions. However, due to the sensitive nature of the changed co-production process and the apprehension that digitalisation caused in some of the participants, it would have been detrimental to the outcomes of the restorative process to gather citizens' feedback this early in the digitalisation process. Similarly, since the change to digitalisation in restorative practices was only recent when writing the article, there were no written reports, country analyses or strategic papers available to support or refute the findings brought out in the case study.

Digitally Mediated Restorative Justice in Four European Countries

The Immediate Effects of Restorative Justice Going Digital

When answering the first research question—*what changed?*, it is important to note that the practical set-up of restorative services by countries varies. In Estonia, victim–offender mediation in criminal proceedings is available since 2007. From 2018, mediation is provided to juveniles in misdemeanour cases. In 2020, a volunteer-based mediation service was launched (ca 120 volunteers). On 12 March 2020, mediation services were shut down due to the state of emergency. Services went online in May 2020.

In Finland, mediation services started in the 1980s with pilot projects. In 2006, the law on mediation came into force and mediation services were coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In 2016, mediation services were transferred under the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (Ojanne, 2017) and there are now over 1300 volunteer mediators (Elonheimo & Kuoppala, 2020). First online mediation pilot was launched in April 2020.

In Ireland, offender mediation and offender reparation programmes have been in operation since 1999 (McStravick, 2015). In 2001, statutory implementation of juvenile restorative group conferencing came into force under the Children Act. In 2019, 433 cases were referred to

[3] According to the Digital Economy and Society Index Report 2020: Digital Public Services (https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-public-services).

[4] Co-vision meetings are a normal part of the service process that help mediators reflect on cases, and it provided an opportunity to discuss the differences between face-to-face and online services.

Table 2 Data collection

Source	When	Method	Participants	Duration	Data collection	Data coding	Code name in the article
Phase 1: observation of online discussions							
Meetings of the European Group for Restorative Justice	6.04.2020 4.05.2020 16.06.2020 16.07.2020	Observation	30 + restorative practitioners from 15 European countries	2 h each meeting	Notes from meetings as a neutral observer	Systematized according to topics of each meeting	April: Group 1 May: Group2 June: Group3 July: Group 4
Phase 2: reflexive phone interviews							
Phone interviews with a service manager	18.06.2020 24.08.2020	Individual interview by phone	Estonian mediation service manager	2 × 30 min	Additions to systematised notes from EG meetings	NA	FVI SM
Phase 3: country interviews							
Estonia	15.02.2021	Group interview on zoom	Mediation service manager, volunteer mediators' coordinator and one mediator	60 min	Recording and transcription	1) Coherence—description of service steps, changes to practice, similarities and differences to offline service reference to adhering to restorative principles 2) Cognitive participation—engagement of mediators and citizens, changes made in the service process, steps taken to teach new skills, materials produced to support implementation 3) Collective action—structuring the new service process, trainings, continuous support, exchange of good practice 4) Reflexive monitoring—methods used to reflect on the changes and improve the service process further Notes from steps 1 and 2 recoded according to step 3	EST
Finland 1	9.02.2021	Group interview on Zoom	Two street mediators	60 min	Recording and transcription		FIN1
Finland 2	17.02.2021	Group interview on zoom	One expert flora the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (responsible for meditation service) and one professional mediator	45 min	Recording and transcription		FIN2
Finland 3	10.03.2021	Individual interview on zoom	Sheet mediator	45 min	Recording and transcription		FIN3
Ireland	18.02.2021	Group interview on zoom	Coordinator of the European group meetings, manager/caseworker and a professor of criminology (research focus on online courts and restorative justice)	1 h 15 min	Recording and transcription		IRL
Portugal	11.02.2021	Individual interview on Zoom	Participant from the European group meetings	45 min	Recording and transcription		POR

Restorative Justice Services (RJS) (Restorative Justice Services, 2020), and in addition, 3,500 children and young people were admitted to Garda Youth Diversion Projects (Egan, 2020). In April–May 2020, RJS kept contact with existing clients via phone or online. From July onwards, service provision was a blend of on-site and online.

In Portugal, the law on victim–offender mediation came into force in 2008 and mediation services were launched in 15 courts as a pilot project. Since 2017, victim–offender

Table 3 Reoccurring themes used in coding fioni the online meetings and interviews according to the components of NPT

Coherence
Meanings: *How did practitioners see digital restorative justice in comparison to regular practices? What are the main similarities and differences? What should the process look like? What are the roles of facilitators and citizens in the process? What are the main risks to consider? Is there common understanding about how the digital process should look like?*
Uses: *When should you allow digital restorative justice? When should it be encouraged? When should one refrain from digital restorative justice? For what type of conflicts/crime can digital restorative justice work?*
Utility: *What are the benefits and challenges of digital restorative justice?*
Competencies: *What are the skills needed for digital restorative justice? What do facilitators need? What do citizens need? Who and how should provide training? Are there new competencies that must be acquired?*
Cognitive participation
Initiation: *How were digital restorative practices launched? What steps were taken before the digital services were launched? Were there pilot projects before frill rollout? How was technical support ensured during launch? How were trainings organised? How did citizens reach service providers to request restorative justice?*
Enrolment: *How were facilitators and citizens encouraged to participate? How was technical support organised during meetings? Were there feedback sessions to further develop the digital co-production process? How were facilitators supported in learning new skills?*
Legitimation: *How did service providers ensure that cooperation partners {e.g. police, prosecutors, probation officers* etc.*) accept agreements reached during online meetings? How was the digital process integrated with other existing services? Were there new guidelines and changes to service descriptions? Was the digital alternative accepted by facilitators, management and citizens alike?*
Collective action
Interactional workability: *How did the facilitators internalise the digital alternative? Were there changes in restorative processes? Did the role of the facilitator change? What were the changes in interaction with citizens?*
Relational integration: *How were* new*/best practices shared? How was it ensured that people that are involved understand the process and everyone's role in it? How were the citizens prepared to take up more responsibility in the restorative process?*
Skillset workability: *How were necessary skills defined? How were the new skills introduced and acquired? How was support and supervision provided? How were the citizens supported?* Contextual integration: *With restorative practice being so reliant on human contact, what was the take on digitalisation? What was the context in general, i.e. the need for restorative justice during lockdown?*
Reflexive monitoring
Individual: *What were the first impressions of facilitators about digital restorative justice? How were the new processes taken on? How did the facilitators assess the utility of the digital restorative justice? What were the pros and cons they found?*
Group: *Were there procedures put in place to monitor the success of digital restorative practices? Was feedback systematised? How was it used? Was there a need for reconfiguration of the digital process?*

mediation can be applied as a diversion measure in the early stages of the criminal process and for minor offences. In 2010, there were around 300 cases per year; no statistics have been available since 2017. From March 2020, the law allows online mediation.

When countries went to lockdown, the first instinct was to wait until lockdown ends and then resume restorative services. However, because there was a heightened need for restorative practices, a digital solution was needed. After the initial experience, the involved professionals perceived that the digitally mediated process itself is not fundamentally different from the physical one. However, the quality and the standard of the co-production process were seen to be somewhat depleted; it was more difficult to build connections, relationships and trust.

> We use the phrase "seeing the whites of their eyes" and we see those whites on the screen but it's not the same. There's not that connection, I don't know what it is, to me it's kind of cold whereas I like to think that when we work with people there's warmth. (IRL)

According to the interviewees, what was perceived to be missing from the digital co-production process, is informal chatting, resulting in extremely business-like online meetings. The importance of chitchat was only properly realised when it became absent during online mediation (IRL, FIN2). In addition, they found that online mediation requires a longer preparation time and more active input from the facilitator, so everyone has a chance to speak, be heard and understood (Group2). Furthermore, during online meetings it is difficult to make sure that everyone participates voluntarily, which is a prerequisite for the co-productive nature of a restorative process (EST SM).

In accordance with previous research on digital co-production, interviewees mentioned some practical benefits of digitalisation. Online meetings enable to save time (FIN1; FIN2; EST) and enable including specialist support persons more easily (Group2). Practitioners also said that

sometimes participants prefer online mediation because it provides a safe distance, as people do not have to physically meet the other person. At the same time, they argued this digital shield could lead to a false sense of security and when victims actually come face-to-face with the offender, the fears might come back (Group4). They also said digital conversation lacks the human touch needed in restorative practices and we should refrain from supporting digital solutions, albeit they are convenient, cost less and help to save time (Group1). In addition, screen fatigue was raised as an issue (IRL) that can hinder the co-production process especially for the participants, resulting in less-than-optimal outcomes for restoring justice.

Interviewees noted that online meetings can be very intimate as they allow to see how the other person lives and what their home looks like (Group2). On the other hand, the interviewees brought out that people sometimes acted too freely at home, e.g. one participant was noticeably intoxicated, and another lit a cigarette during a very sensitive discussion. This raised questions as to whether online meetings should have a different set of rules. Participants discussed having to take into account intruders and interruptions during online meetings, e.g. children or other family members accidentally walking into the meeting, so mediators often ask 'are you alone?' before starting the meeting. This is something new compared to regular mediation meetings where facilitators have better control over the surroundings.

When looking at the success in digital co-production of restorative justice with regard to the chosen countries' advancement in digitalisation and their experience in restorative practices, one can conclude that what plays a crucial role is the readiness to go digital and not so much service experience per se. Finland and Estonia—digitally more experienced—were the quickest to try out digital restorative services, albeit being wary of the effects on the integrity of the co-production process. In Estonia, changes were made in the mediation process itself, moving away from the classical restorative questions[5] used in mediation towards a circle format restorative conversation whereby more people would be involved in the discussion, not simply the victim and the offender (EST SM). As was explained during the interviews, they started using this modified format with cases forwarded by the police involving juveniles not adhering to social distancing rules. According to the interviewees, Ireland with its longer and more varied experience in restorative practices was less eager to go digital. Where longer restorative justice experience comes into play is with regard to the approach to the co-production process, i.e. when Finland and Ireland wanted to introduce standardised training, a digital mediation process and solve security issues before going online, then Estonia opted for learning by doing to ensure service continuity. This could be linked to having only comparatively recently launched restorative practices, and thus, adding an online component did not seem like a big change. Where the interplay between going digital and having restorative practice experience becomes clearer still is in the case of Portugal. There, having only short-term experience and comparatively more modest public service digitalisation record, the question of going digital remained only an idea, although the possibility was introduced in legal regulations.

In conclusion, although the mediation process did not seemingly change, there was an intuitive change in the co-production process, which meant a more directive role for the mediators and more responsibility for the citizens in organising the service context, i.e. ensuring a safe and quiet place to talk and the necessary equipment to attend the online meetings. In addition, the process became more business-like, which put some integral aspects of co-producing justice at risk, such as trust-building and feeling connected. In addition, in Estonia, the co-production process itself was modified and new methods were introduced.

Normalisation of Online Practice and Safeguarding the Principles of Co-production

The following sections will answer the second research question— *how were the digitally mediated practices normalised while safeguarding the fundamentally co-productive nature of restorative justice*—by highlighting the activities implemented to support the abrupt digitalisation of the co-production process that is inherently dependent on human-to-human contact and active interaction. The NPT will be used to showcase the embedding of new activities. It will be shown that the fundamentally co-productive nature of restorative justice was safeguarded when going digital, but a lot more responsibility was shifted on the citizens in order to create a safe environment for the mediation meeting. Although face-to-face meetings resumed once restrictions were lifted, restorative practitioners predict that digital alternatives—also in restorative practice—will remain an option that some citizens might prefer over face-to-face meetings even though it could reduce the quality of a restorative process. This is why special guidelines and more regular feedback were introduced into the co-production process.

[5] Instead of focusing on questions such as: "What happened? What feelings and thoughts has the incident caused? What kind of impact has this had on you and others? What can be done to repair the harm? How can we move on from this?" new questions were introduced such as: "What effects has social distancing had on you? How do you think your friends/family feel? What would you need to feel less stressed?" etc.

I Coherence—Defining the Gist of Digital Restorative Services Coherence refers to a set of ideas about the meaning, uses and utility of a new practice that is made possible, shared and enacted by socially defined and organised competencies (May & Finch, 2009: 542). For a new practice to persist, it needs to be given meaning and the meaning has to be understood. Taking the digital leap for restorative practices required a shift in thinking from facilitators and citizens alike. For example, the interviewees noted the facilitators had to be more explicit in guiding the conversation, which caused them stress; they were anxious whether the devices and connections would work and what happens if technical failures take place when someone has just shared something meaningful and deep (FIN2).

> Restorative meetings inevitably had to be more directive; the facilitator took a much more active role then they might if they're face-to-face. That's really hard for RJ people to get their heads around because so much of their training is about trying to take the backseat as a practitioner but maybe this has to be different. (IRL)

The facilitators had to redefine the way they prepare citizens for mediation, focusing a lot on technical capacities and how it would feel to go through mediation online (FIN2). Independently of their country or digital platform, everyone interviewed agreed that having mediation fully online, instead of a blended model where some are present and others online, is better for the quality of the meeting. In relation to technicalities, signing mediation agreements became cumbersome when electronic signatures were not possible. In Estonia, every citizen has an ID card enabling electronic signing. As was said in one of the Finnish interviews, the mediator would print the agreement and send it for a signature round via regular post (FIN2). It takes a long time to get signatures from everyone, resulting in a less than optimal mediation outcome.

All the interviewees stressed that restorative practices have to be implemented in a safe environment to enable desired results, i.e. repairing harm and taking responsibility for your actions. This, according to the interviews, is more difficult online. Similarly with ensuring confidentiality of the meetings:

> It's difficult to ensure people's safety during a meeting if you're behind a screen and not in the same space. It's impossible for you to intervene, and there's a higher risk of re-victimisation than we would have in physical meetings. (EST)
> Mediation depends on trust and confidentiality and if someone is secretly recording the meeting or taking pictures, we don't really have a way of controlling that. In the beginning of the meeting, we need to remind everyone that you cannot record the meeting or take pictures. It's maybe not the best start to say straight out loud that this would be a crime but it is important to strongly emphasise that this is not allowed. (FIN1)

Based on the interviews, online mediation in cases of domestic violence had additional stress factors for the mediators. Especially when parties were sharing a household, it would not enable the mediator to ensure that the victim can feel safe during the discussion (EST SM). As voiced by an interviewee,

> How do we as mediators know that these people aren't being pressured on the other side of the screen? (EST)

In traditional circumstances, unlike online, one could sense the change in temperature or energies in the room and if necessary, stop the mediation meeting, noted an interviewee (EST SM). For those reasons, in Finland, for example, online mediation is not possible for domestic violence cases (FIN2). It was also said that body language is an important tool to understand the situation and if need be, have a small break when one party is clearly uncomfortable or nervous (GROUP1; FIN3). On the other hand,

> It's more difficult to talk over each other in an online meeting and people are more polite during online meetings and they wait until the other has finished speaking. People are kinder and waiting for the turn because you can't honestly understand anything if everyone spoke at the same time. (FIN2)

Interviewees noted that it is more difficult to get online meetings under control and mediators have felt powerless in situations where citizens lose control over their emotions (FIN2):

> With online mediation, what's scary is that once it goes off the rails, there's no way of getting it back under control. There you really should have closeness, presence. (FIN1)

It is more difficult to follow the energies in the meeting, play with meaningful pauses and make sure that everyone feels safe and supported, the interviewees said. This can become especially difficult when someone has bad internet connection (EST SM). In real-life meetings, silence is normal, whereas in online meetings, silence could also mean that someone has lost their internet connection (GROUP4).

II Cognitive Participation—Initiating Digital Restorative Practices Cognitive participation helps to frame a

practice by enrolling and engaging people in collective action. This means initiating a new practice, people participating in it (enrolment), buying into new ways of working (legitimation) and lastly operationalising the new practice (activation) (May & Finch, 2009: 543–544). Initiating digital restorative practices started with mock processes (Estonia), pilot phases (Finland) or thorough exchange of practices before launching digital mediation (Ireland). In Portugal, a project was launched for a 4-step restorative prisoner re-integration programme, which had a digital component because of restrictions caused by the pandemic. Enrolment to the new practice was supported through guidelines, training and mentoring. For example, a list of preparation instructions was developed for the citizens: find a peaceful place to talk, make sure the device has enough battery to last through the meeting, etc. (FIN1). In addition, a short guideline was developed for the mediators, outlining the service process, including how to make sure citizens are comfortable with having an online meeting and that they participate voluntarily (FIN2). Mediators started mentoring citizens with regard to the technical side of digital mediation. A lot of the process refining took place as learning by doing. There were constant attempts to make mediation as client-friendly as possible, but this also induced discussions about how far to go with customisation.

> Sometimes clients wanted to contact via FB Messenger, they wanted to have the mediation there and this is where we drew the line. This would've meant that you would've had to use your personal account and that's not allowed. (EST)

Initial training for staff and citizens, buying the necessary equipment to improve the quality of the sound and drafting process guidelines supported the activation of online mediation. However, there is a need to legitimate the process so everyone gets accustomed to it, enabling more focus on the content of the conversations and less on the technical side of things.

> This isn't going to go away now. I hope this isn't going to be a significant part of what we do but we're going to the future. We can accommodate people who may want to work remotely with us but we'll have to put in a framework and structure for this, proper cause and guidance. (IRL)

III Collective Action—Organising the New Practice Embedding a new practice involves collective purposive action aimed at a goal and it is dependent on the work that defines and operationalises it (May & Finch, 2009: 544). For a new practice to endure, people should have the necessary skillset and the practice should be integrated in the existing, surrounding context. With the urgent need to keep restorative practices running in lockdown, it became obvious that more structure is needed in the co-production process. In Finland, all mediation staff were trained on how to organise online mediation and issues related to data protection, e.g. how different programmes work, which data they collect, how foreign cloud services work and which risks are affiliated with them (FIN2). The mediators consulted data security experts and based on their advice, drafted standard operation procedures that cover everything from the initiation phase up to writing and signing the mediation agreements online (GROUP2). It became necessary for the mediators to be familiarised with the app they were using so they could give guidance to the participants if necessary. They reworked the practice of working in pairs and had the mediators sit in the same room because it is important for the facilitators to read each other's body language while leading the conversation. As put by an interviewee,

> When one of us gets jammed, the other one can take over, but things would be extremely difficult to observe when we're both like small pictures on the computer screen. (FIN1)

In Estonia, there was no special training developed for mediators; it was more about learning by doing and having one-on-one instructions prior to facilitating a session. It was more important to have '*some sort of a service up and running and developing full training programmes later on'* (EST SM). Although this lack of proper training can be seen as a negative, Finnish colleagues commented on it positively: '*Estonians are always so quick to try out new solutions, whereas we need to have a full system available and tested before we can launch anything new*.' (FIN1). Estonia provided continuous support for the mediators helping them set up Skype meetings and having feedback sessions afterwards to empower them for new cases (EST SM). There was a lot of mediator discretion. For example, once the weather got better in spring, they exchanged screen-mediated meetings for outdoor mediation sessions in the park while keeping a safe distance between participants (EST). In Ireland, a lot of work went into learning from other jurisdictions and colleagues from abroad:

> We had no documentation or referencing to go from. We were getting support and information from other jurisdictions and talking to colleagues from abroad but when you're doing things on your own, you're learning every day, there were operational, logistical and practice issues that we were trying to record and learn from. (IRL)

There were many regular exchanges of practice also inside the team to ensure a smoothly running process. One

of the recurring themes in all the interviews was keeping online mediation as linked to other processes as possible and maintaining its similarities to the analogue version. This helped to maintain the integrity of the co-production process. For example, the restorative programme created for prisoners in Portugal would include a possibility to carry out some parts of the programme online, but that would not change the content of the activities, only the channel (POR). As restorative practices are often part of criminal proceedings, it is necessary that the police, prosecutors and courts accept the agreements reached by the parties attending online mediation. That led to service providers in Finland organising co-vision and reflection sessions ensuring a standardised, yet flexible co-production process that took into account citizens' needs, capacities and competences, but on the other hand, produced results that the authorities accepted.

IV Reflexive Monitoring—Keep Developing the Process Until It Works Reflexive monitoring stands for communal and individual appraisal of the practice and where necessary, practices can be reconfigured (May & Finch, 2009: 546). Although online restorative practices are a relatively new phenomenon, there is already continuous reflection on the practice. Some of the interviewees found it easier to organise online rather than regular meetings, because not only does it save travel time and make it easier to agree on the meeting date and time, but also because it was easier to lead the conversation and because participants did not interrupt each other as often. In contrast, it was said that:

> Online mediation meetings seem easier because we miss out on things we would notice in face-to-face meetings. We don't notice things so we don't have to take them into account but it's really important to notice. You get a false impression that the session went really well. (EST)

In addition, there were doubts about the suitability of online mediation for every case.

> If it radically speeds up the process or the people live in really distant places then of course, online mediation helps. The more sensitive the case, the less I would even consider online mediation. (FIN1)

One of the most common themes where online mediation was seen as questionable were cases of domestic violence, where the balance of power between the parties makes mediation difficult even in regular circumstances. In an online environment, it would be doubly difficult for the mediator to make sure the situation is safe for the victim (EST; FIN2). Since each case is different and oftentimes complex, the mediation process cannot be fully standardised, and hence, the mediator's discretion becomes important. In some cases, the mediators had pre-meetings online and based on the impressions they got, decided to postpone mediation until it was possible to meet in person again.

From the citizens' side, feedback on online mediation was good, according to the mediators. For example, people feel safer during mediation when they are participating from home, especially young people (FIN3). However, mediators were conscious that people who voluntarily opt for online mediation are inclined to like it (FIN2). The mediators were worried that perhaps online meetings do not have the same effect on offenders as regular meetings; they do not nurture the feeling of regret, guilt or responsibility. These are important from the viewpoint of a successful restorative process. However, as was mentioned in one of the interviews, it is:

> Important to acknowledge that we're never going to replicate in-person meetings, so the question becomes more like 'what can we achieve online?'. Can we get people to feel like they're heard? (IRL)

Lastly, it was said throughout the interviews that off-the-shelf applications available today have not been developed for facilitating restorative processes and there is a market for applications developed for mediation. Ideally, these could enable the mediator to pre-set the meeting space as a facilitator so the process itself ran smoothly once the clients are in.

> If you think how the whole mediation community in the world is struggling with this it would make sense to develop an app that suits our needs. (FIN1)
> People are desperate to facilitate good interaction right now, there's a lot of money in that and a lot of competition. It's a question of what we do with that technology, how we re-imagine the interaction. (IRL)

One of the concerns regarding user-friendly online restorative practices was that people opt for the easiest thing and if it is easiest to participate remotely that might become the default option. However, the quality of restorative justice would be depleted and high-quality online options were seen as going in the wrong direction. As a step further, algorithm-based options were discussed whereby the mediator could be replaced by a bot. As the mediator is an impartial party in the process, this option is not wholly impossible. However, a mediation process has so many nuances one cannot simply replace the mediator with an algorithm that proposes articles to the agreement based on answers to certain questions during mediation. There are too many details for a 'robot' to detect. The practitioners agreed that a mediator has to be neutral, but he/she also has to notice the moments where the victim is struggling, does not understand the questions asked or there

is a risk of re-victimisation—'*a real mediator could stop the process but a robot would not notice these slight changes.*' (EST).

Discussion

As was shown above, in a rather short timeframe restorative practices went online due to the need to keep services going, not from a desire to increase efficiency and/or effectiveness (see also Lindgren et al., 2019). In accordance with Kuipers et al. (2019), the uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 increased the complexity of restorative practices. The case proved, as has been shown by previous research (Gelderman et al., 2011; Madsen & Kræmmergaard, 2016; Taherdoost, 2018), that digitalisation has its benefits like economic savings from not travelling or higher productivity because it enables to organise more mediations per day. However, no noticeable increase in effectiveness was seen in this case. On the contrary, practitioners mentioned depletion in the quality of the co-production process.

It was also shown that co-producing restorative justice was more vulnerable to breakdown of communication due to technical constraints and lessened possibilities for exchanging nonverbal symbolic gestures online. Setting up digital restorative practices required an open discussion about the meaningful qualities of restorative justice. For example, active and voluntary participation and a trustful and safe environment are crucial for mediation to bring about results (Bolitho, 2017; Chapman & Törzs, 2018), but creating and maintaining those circumstances in a digital setting is challenging. They were ensured through a more active and directive role of the mediators compared to normal circumstances where the facilitator's role is more laid-back (Bolitho & Bruce, 2017). Much of the facilitation relies on body language, meaningful silence and eye contact (Chapman, 2016), but these become somewhat obsolete in a digital setting. For example, a 'meaningful silence' online might be caused by glitches in internet connection, rather than a person contemplating. This vulnerability to breakdown of communications and not being able to communicate in nonverbal symbolic gestures has also been demonstrated in previous research on digitalisation (Carter & Asencio, 2019; Sumathipala, 2020). This also meant that some aspects of mediation had to be redefined, e.g. the increased role of citizens in creating a safe environment for themselves in the restorative process. In Estonia, the mediation process itself changed from victim–offender mediation towards a circle format restorative conversation.

In summary, the answer to the first research question is that there were changes in the roles that mediators and citizens play in the co-production process, as the mediators had to be more directive than is recommended in restorative practices and citizens on their part were much more responsible for creating the needed environment for restorative justice to take place. As has been said before, customer capabilities and perceived self- and provider efficacy are key for successful co-production (Spanjol et al., 2015) and the abrupt change to digitalisation put these to the test because the technological solutions were not familiar to many. In addition, the digital channel significantly depleted the quality of conversations. This led the practitioners to agree that face-to-face meetings are preferred over online mediation. For the quality of the co-production process in terms of having a safe environment for honest discussions and being able to speak and listen without interruptions, face-to-face mediation was deemed infinitely better. However, there should be an option to meet online when people are not able or willing to travel, provided the mediators carefully consider the specific case and assess the risks and benefits of a digital mediation process, including the possibility of depleted quality.

When looking at *how the digitally mediated practices were normalised while safeguarding the fundamentally co-productive nature of restorative justice*, one could notice that there was hesitation in going digital because restorative practices require active communication and close interactions. For each country, the process started with creating a common understanding, goals and meaning of digital restorative justice. In the words of NPT, a new practice is made possible by "a set of ideas about its meaning, uses, and utility; and by socially defined and organised competencies" (May & Finch, 2009: 542). That is, through creating *coherence*. With the new practices introduced with digitalisation, the facilitators attributed an identity to the digital version of mediation as something that is not as good as face-to-face interaction, but something that is needed to be able to sustain restorative practices during the pandemic. Making sense of digital restorative practices required defining crucial aspects of digital mediation and drawing comparisons with the 'normal' process. This helped to make sure that the essence of restorative justice remains the same even in digital form.

Bringing the meaningful understanding of digital mediation into action meant a sudden and noticeably flexible service initiation process. In Estonia and Finland, the uptake of digital channels was swift compared to Ireland. In Portugal, due to restorative services implementation having been weak prior to the pandemic, digital restorative services remained only an idea. In practice, the launch of digital restorative justice in Estonia, Finland and Ireland meant supported enrolment for both mediators and citizens; they all had to engage in the new practice. Legitimation for the new practice was supported by agreed-upon guidelines. What was additionally important was

advocacy for service continuation—alternative option being the suspension of the highly needed services—and organising technical equipment, training and mentoring. With regard to advocacy, not only was it important to convince the referring agencies in case study countries, e.g. the police and prosecution, that digital restorative practices produce outcomes, but also the European group of restorative practitioners became a forum that allowed an honest debate over the usefulness and risks of going digital with restorative justice. The need to keep the core elements of restorative justice alive also in digital form was considered crucial.

Digitalisation faced reluctance from all sides. For the facilitators, hesitancy was caused by the fear that the essence of the restorative process might be lost when there is a screen separating people. To accommodate this, the facilitators' role in the meetings became more directive to enable a good flow of online discussions. Restorative practitioners also voiced their discomfort and a feeling of insecurity with getting the technology to work properly and feeling helpless in situations where the citizens did not have adequate internet access. The feedback from practitioners additionally showed that online restorative practices are not ideal, as they do not enable reading emotions nor ensure the same feeling of security as do face-to-face meetings. As these are important components in co-producing restorative outcomes, one could argue that this is a real problem in highly sensitive or complex matters, such as domestic violence cases, which is a hidden and physical social problem. From the citizens' side, they sometimes lacked the necessary equipment and good internet connection to co-produce restorative justice, thus hindering the outcomes of the process. This phase of contemplation and developing practical means for digitalising restorative justice is understood as *cognitive participation* in NPT: the initiation of a new practice, people enrolling in the new practice, legitimating it and leading to the activation of the new practice, including providing the necessary resources enabling its implementation (May & Finch, 2009: 543).

In order to roll out the digital practices, *collective action* was needed. This was supported by the social context (the actual need for restorative practices) and group processes (learning within and between organisations, jurisdictions and internationally). Collective action through goal orientation became the mechanism used to safeguard the underlying principles of restorative justice. Being able to try out new solutions in the existing framework, being open to learning from mistakes, sharing best practices and setting up guidelines and training programmes for mediators were behind the successful launch of the new practices. Each country in their own way showed how the existing skillset was used and further developed and how the new practices were integrated to the existing co-production framework. As May and Finch (2009: 544) argue, collective purposive action aimed at some goal can embed a new practice by reshaping people's behaviours and reorganising relationships and contexts.

Lastly, new digital practices were regularly reflected upon during co-vision sessions with practitioners, but also internationally, through the online meetings between European practitioners. In NPT, *reflexive monitoring* refers to formal patterns of monitoring the normative elements of implementation. "These frame how things ought to be, rather than the conventions that frame how things are worked out in practice. The shift from explicit to tacit appraisal by participants is an important signal of the routine embedding of a practice." (May & Finch, 2009: 545) The constant reflection and apprehension about going digital in all studied cases (except Portugal, where digital restorative justice did not actualise) was a natural sign of embedding a new practice. Learning from each other enabled to develop online mediation more quickly and embed digitalisation in the overall co-production process. Honest discussions about possible changes to the co-production process due to digitalisation helped to pinpoint the risks to the essence of restorative justice.

In reflection, concerns were voiced that online restorative practices should not become the new norm, even though they are more convenient, cost less and help to save everyone's time. It was discussed whether the facilitator—a neutral person asking questions and guiding the conversation—could be replaced by a bot and concluded that the role of a good facilitator is to understand the balance of powers between participants and no app can do that. In the end, a bot lacks the human touch that is considered necessary in any restorative process. In short, restorative practitioners in all case study countries prefer face-to-face interaction because it helps to better safeguard the intrinsic nature of the restorative justice co-production process. However, when face-to-face meetings are impossible, the online version is an option that should be used when all risks have been assessed and the mediator can be sure that no re-victimisation can take place during the restorative process.

Conclusion

The article looked at the immediate effects of digitalisation on service co-production, the mechanisms used to safeguard the underlying principles of restorative practices and how new practices were embedded in the existing co-production process. It was shown that the roles of service providers and citizens changed in the co-production process. The former took a more directive role in mediating and the latter became responsible for creating a supporting

service environment. The main mechanisms used in launching digital mediation were learning-by-doing, active exchange of best practice, and integrating digitalisation with existing service processes, which helped to embed the new format alongside the old one. One thing the case study showed was that the launch of digital restorative practices depends most of all on the readiness to try digital solutions and somewhat less on prior service experience. Where the latter comes into play is with setting up digital co-production, i.e. with older, established services, there is a need to introduce some sort of standardisation in mediation preparation, delivery and feedback mechanisms. Where co-production had less rooted processes, like in Estonia, people were more apt to try new solutions and learn by doing. Based on the opinions of the interviewed mediators, face-to-face interaction is, regardless to the abundant digital opportunities, still the norm to strive for. However, what the case taught us is that setting up work practices that aim to keep alive the inherent nature of the co-production process of highly sensitive services, even though there is depletion in interaction quality, is worthwhile if the other alternative is no services at all.

As the current study focused on the immediate effects, it would be interesting to see in future research that if time was dedicated to more meticulous process development—ideally co-created with citizens to match their needs—would it be possible to develop a digital restorative practice that could really be a viable alternative to face-to-face meetings. Due to COVID restrictions, sensitivity of the service (especially where service co-producers are crime victims) and the scope of this article, it was not possible to interview citizens during data collection. However, this could further strengthen the understanding of going digital with highly sensitive and co-produced services.

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Curriculum vitae

Laidi Surva

Personal data

Date of birth:	22.04.1983
Place of birth:	Tallinn, Estonia
Citizenship	Estonian

Contact data

E-mail:	survalaidi@gmail.com

Education

09/2011 – 10/2023	Tallinn University of Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance, PhD studies (Reluctant Co-Producers of Public Services: Understanding Micro-Level Dynamics)
09/2005 – 06/2009	Tartu University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of State Sciences, Master's degree (June 2009, Tartu). Master thesis: Developing Volunteering on Three Levels: Society, Organisation and Individual
09/2002 – 06/2005	Tartu University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of State Sciences, Bachelor's degree (May 2005, Tartu). Bachelor thesis: Change Management in the Context of Administrative Reform: Amalgamation of Rapla City Government and Rapla Municipal Government)

Language competence

Estonian	Native language
English	Proficient
Finnish	Fluent
German	Beginner
Russian	Beginner

Professional employment

02/2023 –	Ministry of Justice Estonia, Department of Criminal Policy, Division of Analysis, Team Lead (Youth Justice Reform and Restorative Justice)
09/2022 – 01/2023	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Estonia, Economic Diplomacy Department, Development Division, Project Manager (part-time)

10/2018 – 01/2023	Ministry of Justice Estonia, Department of Criminal Policy, Division of Analysis, Project Manager
05/2016 – 09/2018	EUAM Ukraine, CSSR Component, Lead Adviser on Good Governance
05/2015 – 04/2016	EUAM Ukraine, Strategic Advisory Component, Good Governance Advisory Unit, Strategic Administration Reform Advisor
03/2014 – 05/2015	Ministry of Justice Estonia, Department of Criminal Policy, Division of Analysis, Programme Coordinator for Prisoner Re-Integration (European Social Funds)
11/2009 – 03/2014	Ministry of Justice Estonia, Department of Criminal Policy, Division of Analysis, Advisor
02/2010 – 06/2010	Tartu University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of State Sciences, leading seminars
10/2009 – 12/2009	Tartu University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of State Sciences, lecturer

Supervised theses

2015	Marten Lauri, Master's Thesis From Co-operation to Co-creation: Partnership between Local Government Units and Community Organizations: The Case of Tallinn *Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance*
2015	Katti Mägi, Master's Thesis The Implementation of Voluntary Principles in Internal Security *Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance*
2015	Stina Raudsik, Bachelor's Thesis Involvement of youth councils in the decision-making process of local governments: case of Tartu City Government *Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance*

2013	Käthe-Riin Tull, Bachelor's Thesis The Role of Different Interest Groups in Political Decision-Making Process: Based on Draft Legislation of The Republic of Estonia Law on Education *University of Tartu, Institute of State Sciences (Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies)*
2012	Kuno Tammearu, Master's Thesis The State's Activities in Ensuring the Sustainability of Volunteer Rescue Brigades *Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance*
2012	Alari Saega, Bachelor's Thesis Possible Membership Policy for Voluntary Military Organizations: Kaitseliit member's voluntary or paid activities *Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech), Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance*

Scientific projects

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Elulookirjeldus

Laidi Surva

Isikuandmed

Sünniaeg:	22.04.1983
Sünnikoht:	Tallinn, Eesti
Kodakondsus	Eesti

Kontaktandmed

E-post:	survalaidi@gmail.com

Hariduskäik

09/2011 – 10/2023	Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, sotsiaalteaduskond, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut, doktorantuur (Tõrksus avalike teenuste koosloomes: mikrotasandi dünaamikad)
09/2005 – 06/2009	Tartu Ülikool, sotsiaalteaduskond, riigiteaduste instituut, magistrikraad avalikus halduses (“Vabatahtliku tegevuse arendamine kolmel tasandil: ühiskond. Organisatsioon. Indiviid”)
09/2002 – 06/2005	Tartu Ülikool, sotsiaalteaduskond, riigiteaduste eriala, bakalaureuse kraad riigiteadustes (”Muutuste juhtimine haldusreformi kontekstis: Rapla linna ja valla ühinemine”)

Keelteoskus

Eesti keel	emakeel
Inglise keel	kõrgtase
Soome keel	kesktase
Vene keel	algtase
Saksa keel	algtase

Teenistuskäik

02/2023 –	Justiitsministeerium, kriminaalpoliitika osakond, analüüsitalitus, tiimijuht (nooresõbralik õigussüsteem ja taastav õigus)
09/2022 – 01/2023	Välisministeerium, majandusdiplomaatia osakond, majandusdiplomaatia arendusbüroo, projektijuht (osaajaga)

10/2018 – 01/2023	Justiitsministeerium, kriminaalpoliitika osakond, analüüsitalitus, projektijuht
05/2016 – 09/2018	Välismissioon EUAM Ukraine, strateegilise nõuande komponent, hea haldustava juhtivnõunik
05/2015 – 04/2016	Välismissioon EUAM Ukraine, strateegilise nõuande komponent, hea haldustava üksus, strateegilise haldusreformi nõunik
03/2014 – 05/2015	Justiitsministeerium, kriminaalpoliitika osakond, analüüsitalitus, projektijuht
11/2009 – 03/2014	Justiitsministeerium, kriminaalpoliitika osakond, analüüsitalitus, nõunik
02/2010 – 06/2010	Tartu Ülikool, riigiteaduste instituut, seminarijuhendaja
10/2009 – 12/2009	Tartu Ülikool, riigiteaduste instituut, lektor

Juhendatud lõputööd

2015	Marten Lauri, magistritöö Koostööst koosloomeni: kohaliku omavalitsuse ja asumiseltside koostöö Tallinna linna näitel *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut*
2015	Katti Mägi, magistritöö Vabatahtlikkuse printsiipide rakendamine sisejulgeoleku valdkonnas *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut*
2015	Stina Raudsik, bakalaureusetöö Noortevolikogude kaasamine kohalike omavalituste otsustusprotsessides Tartu Linnavalitsuse näitel *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut*
2013	Käthe-Riin Tull, bakalaureusetöö Huvigruppide kaasamine poliitilistesse otsustusprotsessidesse: haridusseaduse eelnõude analüüsi näitel Eestis *Tartu Ülikool, riigiteaduste instituut (Johan Skytte poliitikauuringute instituut)*

2012	Kuno Tammearu, magistritöö Riigi tegevus vabatahtlike päästekomandode jätkusuutlikkuse tagamisel *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut*
2012	Alari Saega, bakalaureusetöö Vabatahtlikult korraldatud sõjaväeliste organisatsioonide võimalik liikmepoliitika: kaitseliidu tegevliikme vabatahtlik või tasustatud tegevus *Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, Ragnar Nurkse innovatsiooni ja valitsemise instituut*

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