

## **Co-creation as a new form of citizen engagement**

Comparing Danish and Dutch experiences at the local government level

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# CO-CREATION AS A NEW FORM OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: COMPARING DANISH AND DUTCH EXPERIENCES AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Vinitha Siebers and Jacob Torfing

## ABSTRACT

*Citizen engagement is a key component of modern liberal democracy, especially at the local level, it is an important tool for generating political input, securing political support, mobilizing societal resources and finding creative solutions to the problems and challenges that governments face. Currently, we are witnessing an interesting shift in citizen engagement towards viewing citizens as co-creators of local governance, thus recognizing that citizens have both knowledge and resources that may help tackling wicked and unruly problems. Local governments increasingly focus on the design of co-creation processes and search for ways to support and enhance this new form of citizen engagement. To explore how processes of co-creation unfold at the level of local government, this article analyzes and compares a Danish and Dutch case of co-creation with local citizens. The comparative case study identifies the different reasons for initiating co-creation. It analyses the processes and outcomes of co-creation and reflects on the role of institutional design and leadership. The conclusion is that co-creation can be a viable strategy in very different situations if supported by the right design and leadership.*

**Keywords** - Citizen Engagement, Co-creation, Leadership, Local Government, Governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Citizen engagement is a central feature of modern liberal democracy, and from the late 1960s onwards, it has become a central theme within both national and local governments (Held, 1987; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). It is generally held that citizen engagement enhances the quality of democracy and is valuable for generating political input, mobilizing societal resources and enhancing support to new solutions (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Horlick-Jones, Rowe & Walls, 2007; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). Currently, an important shift in citizen engagement is under way (Rose, 2002). As such, we are moving from a representative democracy, in which citizens are primarily seen as voters and occasionally invited to hearings orchestrated by government officials, to a

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more interactive democracy, in which citizens are involved more actively and directly in co-creating solutions to hard-to-solve problems (Gaventa, 2002; Roberts, 2004; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2016). Local authorities realize that citizens not only have a voice that should be heard through elections and consultations, but also have knowledge, resources and ideas that can be mobilized in the attempt to tackle societal problems and challenges. Citizens are increasingly viewed as co-creators of public governance, and invited to participate in defining the problems at hand and designing and implementing new and bold solutions (Andrew & Goldsmith, 1998; Gaventa, 2002; Roberts, 2004; Torfing, Sørensen, and Røiseland, 2016). Consequently, local municipalities search for new ways to engage citizens in processes of co-creation and new ways to support these processes through institutional design and leadership.

Based on the observation that citizen engagement is changing towards a greater emphasis on co-creation this paper investigates the underlying rationale of co-creation, its empirical manifestation, and the attempt to support it through new forms of institutional design and leadership. The key argument however, is that co-creation is not only used to develop new and creative solutions in situations where there are plenty of resources, but may also be a viable strategy for making difficult choices and prioritizations in situations with severe fiscal constraints.

The article begins by describing the changing view of citizen engagement at the level of local government. It then introduces and analyses two cases of co-creation and compares them in terms of processes, institutional designs and forms of leadership. The discussion reflects on the viability of co-creation as a strategy for local governments facing different kinds of challenges and explores how co-creation may be supported and enhanced by meta-governance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009).

### **New forms of citizen engagement: From voter to co-creator**

The core idea of democracy is that citizens should be able to influence the decisions of government officials. However, the way that citizens engage in democratic decision-making is constantly changing. The educational revolution and anti-authoritarian revolution from the 1960s onwards have triggered several transformations in the perception of how citizens can and should engage in public governance (Warren, 2002). As a result, the traditional forms of citizen engagement have been complemented with new forms of engagement (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The shifting ideas about citizen engagement can be envisaged by comparing four different paradigms that differ in terms of the basic rationale for citizen engagement, the role of citizens, the institutional design of citizen engagement and the kind of public leadership demanded. Table 1 compares the four paradigms for citizen engagement.

*Table 1: Comparison of four different paradigms for citizen engagement\**

	<b>Representative democracy (-1960)</b>	<b>Participatory democracy (1960-1980)s</b>	<b>New Public Management (1980-2010)</b>	<b>Co-creation (2010-)</b>
<b>The basic rationale</b>	Citizens should be able to control government	Intensely affected citizens should have an additional channel of influence	The public sector should be more responsive to the preferences of the citizens	Citizens can help to solve wicked and unruly problems

<b>Role of the citizen</b>	Citizens are voters with opinions that they express in free and open elections	Citizens are affected stakeholders that have interests that they should be allowed to pursue	Citizens are customers with individual needs and requirements that should influence service delivery	Citizens are competent and resourceful actors with both a right and obligation to participate in public governance on the basis of an active citizenship
<b>Institutional design</b>	Regular elections based on one man, one vote	Hearings organized either as city hall meetings or on-line consultations	Free choice of public or private service provider within quasi-markets	Creation of arenas for networked interaction based on sustained dialogue
<b>Leadership</b>	Political parties offer competing programs to attract voters	Public officials organize participatory processes and listen to stakeholders before making final decisions	Politicians and public managers define minimum service standards in quasi-markets and monitor results	Network management aiming to bring actors together, facilitate interaction and stimulate innovative problem-solving

\*Table 1 is based on Lowndes et al., 2001; Fung, 2007; Smith, 2008; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015 and Sørensen & Torfing, 2016.

Before describing the four paradigms, let us first explain what we mean by the basic rationale, the role of the citizen, the institutional design and the form of public leadership. There are shifting political-democratic rationales that seek to motivate and justify why citizens should somehow engage in democratic governance. The different rationales refer to different citizen roles. Hence, the roles of citizens differ in terms of whom the citizens are when they are participating in democratic processes. Citizen engagement also relies on different institutional designs that prescribe different methods for citizens to influence political decisions. According to Fung (2007) and Smith (2008), institutional designs seem to be important in facilitating citizen engagement. Smith (2008) revealed the importance of institutional designs in stimulating citizen engagement in general, while Fung (2007) focused on the influence of institutional designs on the varying objectives of citizen engagement formulated by the government. In addition, Sørensen and Torfing (2016) have shown that there are different kinds of institutional designs to sustain co-creation and they link these designs to Putnam's distinction between social capital, bridging capital and linking capital (Putnam, 2001). Finally, the exercise of public leadership changes in the different types of citizen engagement (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). In recent years, several studies have addressed the importance of leadership in realizing citizen engagement (Denhardt & Campbell, 2006; Băhnăreanu, 2011; Sørensen & Torfing, 2016). In some studies, transformational leadership is seen as an important tool for enhancing citizen engagement (Denhardt & Campbell, 2006). Transformational leaders engage with and listen to their followers in order to create a persuasive account of problems, solutions and the way forward (Burns, 1978; House & Howell, 1992; Bass, 2010). Nye (2008) takes a step further in emphasizing how transformational leaders may learn from their critical followers. Finally, Sørensen and Torfing (2016) show that leadership plays a crucial role in overcoming barriers and executing certain co-creation projects by facilitating interaction with engaged citizens and catalyzing the development of innovative solutions.

Returning to Table 1, the first paradigm is associated with the development of liberal representative democracy and was the hegemonic form of democracy in Western mass societies up to the mid-1960s. In representative democracy the underlying rationale is that the citizens should be able to control government through regular elections (Held, 1987). Citizens pay taxes and should be able to influence how the elected representatives spend this money. Citizens may have opinions about how tax revenues should be spent and should be able to hold elected politicians accountable for their actions and lack of actions, but the role of citizens is rather passive as it is limited to entering the voting booth and determine for whom to vote to in general elections. General elections are held regularly and a range of formal procedures ensures that the election process is fair. Citizens can run for office, or vote for a preferred candidate in a free and open elections. Public leadership is exercised by parties that offer competing party-political programs in the hope of attracting the median voter (Downs, 1957).

The second paradigm emerges in the later 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, there is a growing appreciation of participatory democracy. Citizens affected by a particular decision, for example the construction of a new highway close to their neighborhood, should have an additional channel of influence through which they can affect the outcome of public policymaking between elections. People should be able to participate more actively than representative democracy traditionally permits, and citizen participation should stimulate debates between public officials and lay actors. Indeed, participatory democracy should be deliberative in the sense that decisions should not always derive from majority voting, but emerge from political debate in which arguments and giving reasons counts as much as the number of votes (Jongh, 2013). In this perspective, citizens are viewed as affected stakeholders with interests that they should be able to defend and pursue, for example, by commenting on public plans and policies (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; Lowndes et al., 2001). The new forms of participatory democracy are supported by institutional designs of public hearing processes, town-hall meetings, citizens panels and forums for public participation and debate through which citizens can express their interest, views and preferences (Lowndes et al., 2001). Public administrators have to learn the skills of convening and facilitating public meetings, hearings and consultations and the elected politicians exercise leadership by listening to relevant stakeholders before taking the final policy decisions.

With the rise of New Public Management in the 1980s and 1990s a new, third paradigm for citizen engagement arises. Although citizen engagement was never a core objective of New Public Management, it aspires to give ordinary citizens more power. As such, New Public Management wanted to make the public sectors more responsive to the needs and wants of the citizens. Public employees were criticized for paying little attention to the users and this had to be changed by introducing market mechanisms in public service production as a way to make the public sector leaner, more efficient and more service-minded (Bryson et al., 2014; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The citizens were recast as customers with wants and needs. Both public and private service providers were forced to compete over the customer. The new customer power was supported by new institutional designs that combined the creation of quasi-markets in which public authorities would purchase services from public and private providers with the free choice of service providers. Public leadership is limited to determination of minimum service standards offered by public and private service providers and monitoring of service contracts.

Whereas representative democracy gave the citizens a choice on the input side of the political system, New Public Management gave them a choice of service provider on

the output side of the political system. The choice was supposed to signal the needs and wants of the citizens, but these should not play an active role in debates with public officials in the way recommended by participatory democracy. However, the story continues since we are witnessing today a turn towards co-creation that gives citizens an active role and a new responsibility for creating solutions to complex problems. Today, we are facing a large amount of wicked and unruly problems that the public sectors cannot solve alone. Indeed, no private or public actors have the knowledge, resources and ideas to solve complex problems and challenges. Solutions must be co-created through horizontal interaction and exchange between relevant and affected actors. Ideally, co-creation of public value involves co-initiation, co-design and co-implementation of joint solutions, but in real life, we must often settle for less. Local authorities realize that citizens do not only have a voice that should be heard, interests to pursue or needs and requirements to be signaled. Citizens have resources, knowledge and ideas that can be mobilized. Hence, citizens are increasingly viewed as co-creators that collaborate with other private and public actors to create new and better solutions to the problems and challenges that local governments face (Andrew & Goldsmith, 1998; Cruikshank, 1999; Gaventa, 2002; Roberts, 2004; van Dijk, 2015; Torfing, Sørensen and Røiseland, 2016). In co-creation processes citizens collaborate with private firms and organizations, public employees and elected politicians to define problems and find and implement new solutions (Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers, 2015; Torfing et al., 2016). Co-creation calls for the institutional design of platforms that enables the formation of networks, partnerships and other types of collaborative governance (Bryson et al., 2014; Torfing & Ansell, 2017). Fung (2007) identifies several institutional choices that governments have to make when involving citizens in broad processes of co-governing and co-creation. Sometimes, the co-creation paradigm is seen as part of a wider movement called Public Value Management (Bryson et al., 2014) or New Public Governance (Osborne, 2006, 2010). Public leadership becomes here a matter of bringing the right public and private actors together, facilitating dialogue and collaborative interaction, stimulating innovation and ensuring progress and implementation of new and bold solutions (Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Torfing, 2016).

Co-creation is particular relevant to local governments since these interact with citizens and local stakeholders on a daily basis and therefore have good opportunities to engage these citizens in public value production. However, we know little about how local municipalities design and lead co-creation processes that engage local citizens and stakeholders. By exploring co-creation in two different municipalities, we aim to shed light on the empirical forms and experiences of co-creation. We also aim to test whether co-creation is taking place only when municipalities have money to spend on the development of new and innovative projects. Co-creation is frequently accused of being conditioned on fair weather, but we want to explore whether it might also work in hard weather conditions characterized by fiscal constraints and public expenditure cuts. As such, our paper not only contributes to understanding what co-creation of public value might look like in practice, but also explores the scope conditions.

## METHOD

In order to analyze the local experiences of citizen engagement through co-creation, we have conducted a qualitative comparative case study. The case study method enables us to study a complex phenomenon, such as co-creation, in its specific context and the

comparative study of two different cases permits us to identify similarities and differences (Baxter and Jack, 2008). First, we describe the procedure of the case selection and data collection, and then we introduce the two cases more thoroughly.

#### *Case selection and data collection*

To better understand the organization, process, and outcomes of co-creation at the local level, we selected a case from a Danish municipality and a case from a Dutch municipality. Denmark and the Netherlands are interesting countries because of their recent municipal amalgamation reforms in which local municipalities merged into bigger units and the administrative capacity to organize and facilitate co-creation is enhanced (Peters, 2014). With the development of larger municipalities there is a risk that the distance between the political and administrative decision-makers and the local citizens increases. To counter this risk and shorten the distance between citizens and municipalities, there has been a growing number of attempts to engage citizens in ways that seem to change the relationship between local governments and citizens (Peters, 2010). One strategy is to shift the focus from local hearings and consultations and the emphasis on free consumer choice to a new emphasis on co-creation that brings citizens and private stakeholders in a close rapport with municipal officials and allows the actors to collaborate in finding solutions to pressing problems. Both countries have relatively favorable conditions for making a turn towards co-creation. They have strong local governments, well-organized civil societies, a long tradition for public-private collaboration, and decentralized welfare states that means that local citizens tend to find it worthwhile to engage with local decision-makers to influence outcomes. As such, both Denmark and the Netherlands are frontrunners in exploring the benefits from co-creation.

The two cases were carefully selected based on multiple criteria. To avoid selection bias, we selected cases from mid-sized municipalities that were subject to a restructuring and we looked for on-going attempts to involve citizens in co-creation. Within the municipalities we looked for cases where the purpose of co-creation varied from development to managing fiscal constraints. Two matching cases were identified and those involved in both were willing to participate in the study. The cases are: 1) *the development of the Musicon project* in the municipality of Roskilde in Denmark and 2) *the dialogue about budget cuts* in the municipality of Zeist in the Netherlands. Clearly, in the *Musicon project* co-creation is used as a strategy to develop something new in good weather conditions whereas in the *dialogue budget about cuts* co-creation is used as a problem-solving tactic in hard weather conditions.

The data of the cases were collected in two different time periods. The data from the *development of the Musicon project* were collected from February to March 2017. The data consists of six semi-structured interviews with members of the municipal council, the executive board comprising the mayor and the aldermen, the public administration and civil society<sup>1</sup>. In addition, documents were found at municipal websites or provided to us by the interviewees.

The data from the *dialogue about budget cuts* in Zeist was collected from May to June 2016 in the same way as the first project. The data consists of seven semi-structured interviews with representatives of the municipal council, the executive board consisting of the mayor and the aldermen, public administration and civil society. Furthermore the interviewees varied in gender, function, age and representation of political parties in the

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<sup>1</sup> The civil society includes citizens, private organizations and civil society organizations.

municipal council. Furthermore, relevant documents were found at local websites or handed to us by the interviewees. With the selection of different representatives we aimed to get different perspectives on the process of co-creation. The data were coded using the described theoretical framework. The different types of qualitative data facilitated triangulation that enhances the reliability and validity of the results<sup>2,3</sup>.

### *Case presentation*

#### *a) The Musicon project*

The municipality of Roskilde is a mid-sized municipality with about 85,000 citizens (Danmarks Statistik, 2015). The municipality is located just outside the capital region. Roskilde Municipality is home to several significant cultural institutes and events that have to do with music (e.g. the Roskilde festival) (Strategy Musicon, 2007). It also has several educational institutions with a lot of young people. The *Musicon project* was initiated by the municipality of Roskilde. In 2003, it purchased the land of a former concrete factory covering approximately 250,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The municipality saw this huge area, situated close to the city center and the southern entry from the freeway, as an opportunity to build a new cultural neighborhood named Musicon.

In developing the Musicon neighborhood, the municipality decided to adopt a new type of collaborative planning. Instead of having architects to draw up a master plan that the city developers could then implement, the idea was to let activity precede structure. They invited all kinds of local actors to come and build new activities in the area where land was plentiful and some big empty buildings were still in place. Sustainable cultural activities would be awarded with the creation of new permanent structures. The planning process would be slow and bottom-up and rely on active engagement of citizens, civil society organizations, private business or other actors from the civil society. Private actors could contact the municipality if they had good ideas and would be invited to network meetings to present, grow, revise and finally implement their ideas. Artists, skaters, musicians, festival people, dance performance ensembles, sports associations, recording studios, and many others lined up to present ideas for local activities and future structures. Experimentation and collaboration decided which projects that would be furthered and gain foothold.

The development of the Musicon neighborhood is based on three important elements (Strategy Musicon, 2007: 10):

1. The idea is to create an urban environment that develops itself and is not subject to strict planning. The motto is ‘plan as little as possible and as much as needed’.
2. Temporality is central. Temporality allows the participants to experiment with and evaluate new ideas and to broaden their own network as a participant of Musicon.
3. The participants within Musicon do not only develop the projects and activities themselves, but also manage and maintain them. This ensures a broad ownership amongst both developers and citizens.

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<sup>2</sup> An overview of the interviews of both cases is displayed in *appendix 1*.

<sup>3</sup> Due to availability of interviewees the amount of interviews can differ between cases.

*b) The dialogue about budget cuts*<sup>4</sup>

The municipality of Zeist is also a mid-sized municipality with 61,250 citizens (CBS, 2014). The municipality covers approximately fifty square kilometers and is close to the city of Utrecht, one of the four largest cities in the Netherlands. The *dialogue about budget cuts* was initiated by the municipality of Zeist. In 2010, the municipality faced a huge challenge. Due to budget cuts implemented by the Dutch national government, the municipality had to save 6.2 million EUR per year. The municipality of Zeist realized that the large amount of savings would greatly impact the living conditions of the residents of Zeist in areas such as sports, leisure, healthcare or maintenance of streets and it wondered who would be affected the most by these cuts. At the same time, the municipality realized that the relationship between government and society was changing due to social and political developments like decentralization, individualization and the rise of assertive citizens. Hence, new approaches to engage citizens were deemed necessary (Andrew & Goldsmith, 1998; Fischer, 2000; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001; Gaventa 2002; Schepers, Toorn & Lissenberg, 2012). Consequently, the municipality of Zeist decided that it was up to the local community of Zeist to discuss, prioritize and make recommendations about the necessary budget cuts. The municipality was convinced that citizens and civil society actors had the knowledge and ability to express and represent their own interests and provide ideas for solutions (Schepers et al., 2012). As a result, public managers, the executive board of mayor and aldermen and the municipal council of Zeist decided to implement a method that they referred to as *the dialogue* to manage the budget cuts. The dialogue about the budget cuts actively engages local citizens, organizations and entrepreneurs of Zeist in order to find smart and tailor-made solutions to the fiscal problems that the municipality was facing. Civil servants, council members and the members of the executive board were all prepared to support, facilitate, and participate in the dialogue, and to let local citizens and stakeholders participate in the co-creation of the solution. They also committed themselves to wait to make any final decision before the dialogue was brought to an end and they had had time to consider the results.

As a result, the idea was to develop a shared responsibility among the social and political actors through a co-creation process (Torfing et al., 2016).

Four basic principles form the basis for the dialogue about budget cuts in the municipality of Zeist (Schepers et al., 2012):

1. The municipality believes that societal actors have the knowledge, expertise, creativity and strength to contribute to solving public problems and challenges.
2. Those who own the problem also own the solution. Since the local citizens are the owner of both the problem and the solution, they should be invited to co-create the solution to the budget problem.
3. All relevant and affected parties should be involved in the dialogue and they should be identified through a stakeholder analysis that generates insights into the needs, interests and behaviors of the interested parties (Brugha and Varvasovszky, 2000).

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<sup>4</sup> Parts of this section are translated from a Dutch report ‘Vernieuwing lokale democratie een onderzoek naar burgerparticipatie op lokaal niveau in Zeist’ (Siebers, 2016). This also applies to the results section.

4. Finally, during the dialogue, it is important that the participants have the desire to listen to and understand each other in order to facilitate learning (Schepers et al., 2012: 10-12).

In both cases the municipality searched for new ways to engage their citizens instead of using traditional methods that are often characterized municipal decision making and municipal planning. In the municipality of Roskilde, citizen engagement in co-creation was focused on urban planning and in the municipality of Zeist this engagement was focused on how to spend money wisely and make the necessary budget cuts. Both cases relied on co-creation in the sense of collaborating on defining the problem and designing and implementing solutions, but the cause or purpose of the co-creation process differs. It is interesting to examine whether the different reasons to initiate co-create will impact the process and outcomes.

### RESULTS: COMPARATIVE CASE ANALYSIS

The comparative case analysis focuses on the process of co-creation. *The underlying rationale, the role of the citizens, the institutional design* and the exercise of *public leadership* are key aspects of the analysis. The analysis of the basic rationale is concerned with the reasons for initiating co-creation and the objectives of the co-creation process. The analysis of the *role of citizens* is focusing on how actively citizens are involved and what they are supposed to contribute and bring to the table. *The analysis of the institutional design* looks at the different methods that the municipality deploys to realize co-creation. The analysis of the exercise of *leadership* addresses the type of leadership that is required to facilitate and benefit from co-creation. The analysis of the four aspect of the process analysis is complemented by a brief review of the challenges and success factors that become visible in the two cases.

#### *The basic rationale of the municipality to initiate co-creation: reasons and objectives*

The results of our empirical analyses of the municipality's basic rationale for embarking on co-creation are displayed in Table 2. Co-creation in the *Musicon project* was used as an opportunity to create a new kind of neighborhood in which music and cultural creativity would thrive and the connection between the municipality and the Roskilde festival would be strengthened. Reasons cited to initiate the co-creation process were: to strengthen the profile of Roskilde as a thriving cultural city, to find a new usage of a deserted post-industrial area, to focus on the production of cultural experiences rather than material products, doing it differently through a new strategy to avoid planning disasters and use the resources and knowledge of the local society to create a new neighborhood. The city manager of Roskilde explains:

‘There has always been a vision to establish a part of the city that is completely different from the other parts (...). It has to have something to do with creative industry and creative architecture so it is different from the historical city center. But we need to involve local actors to do this’ (Interview 8).

In the *dialogue about budget cuts* our findings reveal that co-creation was used to solve a complex fiscal problem. Reasons cited were: the size of the budget cuts, the potential-

ly harmful effects on the lives of the local citizens, the attractiveness of adopting a new method instead of the traditional one in which the municipality one-sidedly makes the solution and takes the blame, and the recognition that the municipality could not alone solve the problem alone without the knowledge, wisdom and support from the local community of Zeist. A civil servant of the municipality of Zeist confirmed the importance of the use of the knowledge and wisdom:

‘The critical success factor was the involvement of local society. The participating citizens provided a 360 perspective on the different themes and problems and thus provided a much needed input’ (Interview 4).

This quote revealed that the wisdom of local society and input from local citizens was considered important for understanding the problem at hand and finding an acceptable solution.

Besides the various reasons for co-creating new solutions, we have also identified some key objectives of the *Musicon project* and the *dialogue about budget cuts*. Table 2 shows how the objectives in the two cases differ. Within the *Musicon project* the main objective was to create a new living area through bottom up planning in which the life and activities of the users comes first and within the *dialogue about budget cuts* the main objective was to solve a complex fiscal problem.

Table 2: *Rationale of the municipality: reasons and objectives (N = 13).*

	<i>Musicon Project</i>	<i>Dialogue about budget cuts</i>
<b>Reasons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthen the connection between the municipality and the Roskilde festival and brand Roskilde as a cultural city;</li> <li>- Re-use a deserted post-industrial area;</li> <li>- Create a new urban living area that will attract new citizens;</li> <li>- Focus on experience economy in which experiences of the citizens become more central than material products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complex challenge: realizing budget cuts of 6,2 million EUR;</li> <li>- The budget cuts are too big to handle the usual way;</li> <li>- Cut s made by the national government potential impair the public services and infrastructures available for citizens;</li> <li>- There is a need for dialogue to generate new ideas and build ownership;</li> <li>- Clear understanding that the municipality could not alone solve this issue; input from society was needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a new and attractive neighborhood that is characterized by creativity, culture, music in order to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance livability;</li> <li>• Attract citizens;</li> <li>• Enhance creativity of society;</li> <li>• Stimulate economic growth;</li> <li>• Strengthen the profile of Roskilde.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Life and activities of the users of Musicon should come before physical structures;</li> <li>- Planning should be slow, participatory and bottom up planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realize the budget cuts in and through a dialogue with the local society;</li> <li>- Enhancing trust between the local municipality and the municipality;</li> <li>- Minimizing the deterioration of municipal services and facilities;</li> <li>- Objectives related to the process of the dialogue:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity among the individuals who participated in the dialogue is important;</li> <li>• A rough consensus among the involved parties is desired;</li> <li>• The stakeholders who participate in the dialogue are responsible for finding the solutions to the budget cuts.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

In sum, the findings show that the two cases of co-creation vary both in terms of reasons given and objectives stated. The *Musicon project* was initiated because the municipality wanted to seize the opportunity to create an innovative neighborhood and the *dialogued about budget cuts* was initiated because the municipality needs input and support to deal with a huge budget cut. These findings support the reasons for selecting the two cases. Despite the different reasons and objectives summarized in Table 2, the two cases build on the same basic *rationale* in the sense that they want to use the knowledge and expertise of local citizens and stakeholders to find a solution to the problem or challenge at hand.

### *Role of the citizens*

The role of the citizen hinges on whether they are playing a relatively passive role as political consumers or service customers or a more active role as participants in hearings and consultations or as co-creators in creative problem solving. Our findings show that citizens play an active role in both cases that takes us beyond the type of veto actors that is associated with participatory planning. Nevertheless, the role of the citizens differs between the two cases. In the case of the *Musicon project* the role of the citizens was to develop, execute and perform plans. Citizens collaborated with each other with urban planners in developing new events and activities in the Musicon neighborhood. In the *dialogue about budget cuts* citizens on the other hand did not perform or execute plans but rather participated in the development of plans for realizing the budget cuts. In so doing, the citizens involved in the development of the Musicon neighborhood played a slightly more active role by developing and executing plans compared to the citizens in the dialogue about budget cuts in which citizens were only involved in the planning phase.

Despite the differences in how actively involved the citizens are in the two cases, both municipalities aim to use the experience, knowledge and expertise of local citizens and stakeholders to find a new and creative solution. Citizens are perceived as competent and knowledgeable and their active support to the result is considered as very important.

### *Institutional design*

Central to the institutional design in the *Musicon project* was the development of a new organization outside of the town-hall of Roskilde. This idea took inspiration from a Dutch start-up organization that was established outside the formal hierarchy of the municipality. As a consequence a new kind of organization emerged which facilitates the development and execution of plans in close collaboration with the participants from civil society, private business and other key stakeholders referred to as users and investors.

Central to the institutional design of the *dialogue about budget cuts* was the adaptation of a method that the European Commission sometimes uses to make difficult decisions. The municipality of Zeist divided the budget into nine themes to be discussed in nine different expert committees. The expert committees consisted of local citizens, social entrepreneurs and private stakeholders who all had an interest in a particular theme. Civil servants facilitated the dialogue in the expert committees. The members of the expert committees were selected based on a stakeholder analysis conducted by the administration that resulted in personal invitations from the aldermen to a broad variety of actors. The expert groups developed substantive proposals for how to realize the budget cuts in the least damaging way. In this way, the expertise, resources and creativity of

local society were mobilized and put to use. In the end, the outcomes of the deliberations were discussed by the municipal council. The municipal council had the ultimate responsibility for approving or disapproving the proposals from the expert committees.

Our findings reveal several similarities in institutional design. In both the *Musicon project* and the *dialogue about budget cuts* new institutional arenas were introduced to facilitate the process of co-creation and ensure its integrity.

In the *Musicon project* a new position as director of Musicon who had a small secretariat on location was created, a financial committee, a political committee, a chairmanship, an oversight committee and an advisory board consisting of the municipality, the festival and various knowledge institutions (known as the Musicon Valley). In the *dialogue about budget cuts* there was, besides the nine expert committees, created positions as of chefs de dossiers guiding the expert committees, an informal advisory committee and a committee of irregularities. The various authorities and institutions all had the common goal of supporting and monitoring the co-creation process by bringing relevant actors together in a fruitful collaboration that would realize the joint ambitions. The attempt of the new institutional bodies to govern the more or less self-governing processes of co-creation is referred to as meta-governance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). In fact, our findings reveal that several meta-governance structures were created in both cases. Co-creation does not emerge as a spontaneous process and needs to be given a direction. Hence, meta-governance seems to be an important tool for initiating and supporting co-creation.

In addition, both municipalities organized a string of meetings in order to create plans to develop new activities in the Musicon neighborhood and realize the budget cuts. The similarity between the meetings arranged in the two cases is that civil servants are involved as process facilitators and knowledgeable resource persons only and do not discuss policy content in the meetings. Their contribution lies in preparing the meetings and providing background information to the participants (e.g. citizens, social entrepreneurs, stakeholder organization, or politicians). The administrative facilitators also answered questions about legal matters and municipal regulations. All in all, the meetings facilitated an interactive governance process in which public and private actors exchanged views and ideas (Torfing et al., 2012).

Clearly, the municipality has a facilitation role, but the municipalities interpret the facilitation role differently. In the *Musicon project* the municipal planners facilitate collaboration and dialogue as well as they play a key role in the discussions and the creation and execution of development plans. The municipality invests money in new infrastructure and takes the overall responsibility for realizing the political goals. The politicians are more on the side-line, alternating between giving political and economic support to the Musicon project and impatiently waiting to see the results of the slow planning process. In the *dialogue about budget cuts* however the municipality is merely involved at a process level. The civil servants, council members and aldermen primarily focus on the conditions and quality of the dialogue and not on the actual result of the dialogue. Neither the elected politicians nor the political leaders take an active part in the discussions, but leave it to the citizens to come up with a proposal for how to cut the budget with 6.2 million EUR. As such, the dialogue is more about delegating policy making to citizens than co-creating a solution with them.

Finally, both cases organized some additional activities related to branding, the role of the municipality as a proactive actor and the need for having a clear story-line and vision. Table 3 gives an overview of the different kind of institutional designs used in both co-creation processes in relation to the governance structure.

Table 3: *Institutional design: methods (N = 13).*

	<i>Musicon project</i>	<i>Dialogue about budget cuts</i>
<b>Meta-governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of position as director of Musicon supported by a small secretariat and a Musicon secretary;</li> <li>- Monitoring development of Musicon through expert evaluation on urban planning;</li> <li>- Chairmanship consisting of the city manager, the Musicon leader and the CEO of the Roskilde festival;</li> <li>- Financial committee who is in charge of the financial aspects;</li> <li>- Political committee comprising local party leaders and key investors overseeing the project;</li> <li>- Musicon advisory board consisting of the Musicon Valley collaboration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of positions as chef de dossiers: each theme had their own chef de dossier who supported the expert committee;</li> <li>- Informal advisory committee consisting of the chairmen of the parties represented in the municipal council;</li> <li>- A committee of irregularities that would intervene in case something went wrong;</li> <li>- Meetings with municipal councilors and citizens to discuss the progress of the dialogue.</li> </ul>
<b>Interactive governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizing meetings between all the different users of Musicon to discuss new developments;</li> <li>- Organizing workshops about concrete development projects;</li> <li>- Organizing games and guided tours for the people interested in Musicon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizing meetings with the expert committees to create plans based on dialogue;</li> <li>- Issuing green papers describing the background and context on the problem and the vision for solving it) and white papers describing the solutions and concrete proposals for the problem delineated in the green papers.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investment of municipality in technical infrastructure (e.g. road, electricity and sewer system);</li> <li>- Clear motto, vision focused on limited planning and temporary projects;</li> <li>- Branding through social media, visiting conferences, storytelling and organizing festivals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Branding of the municipality and the dialogue through 3D drawings on the street.</li> </ul>

### *Leadership*

We now turn to consider the *exercise of leadership* in the two cases of co-creation. As mentioned earlier, leadership plays an important role in harvesting the fruits of co-creation. The interviews suggest that in the *Musicon project* the realization of the endeavor to co-create a new neighborhood depended on the type of leadership that can be referred to as strong leadership. Expounding values like openness, mutual support, joint commitment, stimulating ideas, courage to do new things, belief in collaboration and joint problem solving and willingness to listen are mentioned. The analysis showed that the Mayor, the city manager, the council members or chairmanship were important in

exercising this kind of leadership. The interviews showed that several civil servants and users of Musicon found this kind of leadership important.

In the *dialogue about cuts* the findings show that the realization of the cut backs depends on the same type of leadership. Leadership was mainly exercised through the expression of values. The values that were referred to in the interactions with citizens and stakeholders were *daring*, *courage*, *relativization*, *respect*, *proximity to society*, *strength in terms of resources* and *trust* in each other (citizens, civil society organization, municipal council, executive board of Mayor and Aldermen and public administration) and in oneself (confidence in one's own ability to express and opinion and influence things). The values *daring* and *courage* were mainly expressed by the council members. These values were also expressed by the members of the executive board of mayor and aldermen that also emphasized the value of *trust*. Civil servants agreed with both the council members as well as with members of the executive board of Mayor and Aldermen, but added the values of *proximity* and *strength*. Finally, civil society actors saw *respect* and *relativization* as important values supporting the interaction. As such, the analysis indicates that in *the dialogue about budget cuts* values play a crucial role in linking the actors. In order to create and advance these values, a transformational leadership is required (Băhnăreanu, 2011). Our findings suggests that the political and administrative leaders acted as transformational leaders by developing, communicating and holding on to a normative vision that produced and sustained values that brings different actors together in an engaged, trustful and productive dialogue in which people are willing to listen to each other (see Bass, 2010).

As many of the values emphasized by the political and administrative leaders focus on the value of collaboration, we may conclude that there are also strong elements of integrative leadership focusing on bringing actors together. Innovation leadership also seems to play a role in relation to the Musicon project, but not so much in the dialogue about budget cuts.

Our research resonates well with previous findings that showed the importance of transformational leadership in promoting citizen engagement (Denhardt & Campbell, 2006; Băhnăreanu, 2011). Although, the findings suggest that transformational leadership style is essential for the co-creation process to flourish, they also points to challenges for the public managers. While New Public Management has demanded that public leaders should focus on their own budget, organizations and employees and make sure that pre-defined targets are met, co-creation urges public leaders to lead crosscutting collaboration between a broad range of public and private actors and stimulate the emergence of new and hitherto undiscovered solutions (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). This observation brings us to the challenges encountered in the two cases.

### *Challenges*

The interviews revealed a variety of challenges that both municipalities faced when aiming to solve complex problems through co-creation. Table 4 provides an overview of the different challenges. In the *Musicon project* a distinction can be made between challenges related to civil society and challenges related to the municipality. In the *dialogue about budget cuts* the challenges can also be divided in challenges related to the societal actors and challenges related to the municipal actors. Examples of the two types of challenges are provided below.

The first type of challenge relating to the *Musicon project* is related to challenges regarding the civil society (in specific the users of Musicon) and comes with a twist. An urban planner explains: ‘Our way of developing the Musicon area creates a dilemma. We try to create an open and playful environment that appeals to the kind of creative people that we want to attract, but that might scare off some of the private investors and the local citizens’ (Interview 9). The challenge is a typical one and relates to the biased recruitment of societal actors in co-creation processes. The tendency to recruit different types of people (e.g. with different backgrounds) is a problem.

A similar challenge is encountered in the *dialogue about budget cuts* and is relayed to us by a council member who says: ‘What I have noticed is that we still get the usual bunch of people who participate in the process’ (Interview 2). The tendency to recruit citizens from the well-off middle classes rather than those with a low educational level and low income is a huge problem, especially when it comes to making recommendations about public cuts. Here the mobilization of a diverse group of actors representing different socio-economic groups is important in order to avoid ‘passing the buck’ to the less fortunate citizens. Again, the problem is a far too selective recruitment of participants, it is not so much a question of different types of people as a question of socio-economic status.

With regards to the second type of challenge related to the municipality the findings reveal that within the *Musicon project* this has to do with the continuous development of the area. A former leader says:

‘It is a challenge to let loose and don’t make any concrete plans, but we have decided that the area has to develop by itself without a Masterplan’ (Interview 12).

In addition to that, challenges such as attracting new investors, building trust and support in the municipal council to the plans of the Musicon, and providing the right tools and giving more responsibility to the Musicon users are mentioned. These latter challenges are all central to the continuous development of the Musicon area.

With the *dialogue about budget cuts* the main challenge has to do with the interpretation of the roles of different actors involved. It is revealed that role ambiguity can emerge as a result of the co-creation process. This has to do with the concern that council members and civil servants have to exert little power or influence on the co-creation process. The mayor explains: ‘You are constantly searching for ways to involve the municipal council in the process. This applies also for the executive board, administration and society. They are looking for their role and should consider how everyone is appreciated. You have to be well aware exactly where you are in the process’ (Interview 1). Further examples of the many challenges are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: *Overview challenges within the co-creation process (N = 13).*

	<i>Musicon project</i>	<i>Dialogue about budget cuts</i>
<b>Challenges related to the civil society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attract creative people without scaring off investors and local citizens;</li> <li>- Find ways to make it easy for users to express and pursue a new idea;</li> <li>- Develop mechanisms for ensuring that projects become sustainable;</li> <li>- Manage uncertainty as the consequences of new ideas and proposals for both the users themselves and the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involve a diverse group of participants reflecting different socioeconomic groups;</li> <li>- Make sure participants who enter the dialogue have a sufficient level of knowledge and commitment.</li> </ul>

	municipality are often unclear and the support needed to realize new projects is difficult to determine.	
<b>Challenges related to the municipality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build a network of creative industries and architects that enhances synergies;</li> <li>- Build a joint responsibility among the investors by encouraging collaboration</li> <li>- Letting the area develop itself bottom-up while ensuring that the legal ramifications are respected;</li> <li>- Develop a new and innovative neighborhood without alienating the neighbors that most consist of social housing projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage the role changes for the different actors (municipal council, executive board of Mayor and Aldermen, administration and society) when shifting from top-down government to co-creation of solutions;</li> <li>- Establish the best way that the municipal council can monitor the process so that it does not get out of hand.</li> </ul>

A closer inspection of the content of Table 4 shows that the challenges relating to the *Musicon project* and the *dialogue about budget cuts* differ, although relate to the same types of actors. Whereas the challenges related to the *Musicon project* concerns the question of how to plan the creation of a new creative neighborhood based on a new planning vision, the challenges facing the *dialogue about cuts* mainly concerns how to improve the process of co-creation. The explanation of this important difference might be that Roskilde Municipality has more experience with co-creation than the Municipality of Zeist. However, more research is needed to establish whether this is true.

#### *Success factors*

Despite the aforementioned challenges, there were also a number of *success factors* that were important for realizing the ambition to gradually fill-in the new Musicon neighborhood with a cluster of cultural activities, attractions and businesses and co-create dramatic cuts in public budgets.

The *Musicon project* was supported by a number of factors that relate to investment, leadership and advertisement. The list of success factors contains five items:

- 1) A clear definition of the role and vision: A constant dialogue about the role of the different actors and the overall vision of the Musicon project was important securing a continued engagement of the various actors.
- 2) Broad and diversified stakeholder involvement: Involvement of a broad range of different actors (e.g. architects, artists, skaters, local residents and private developers) was important to develop creative activities and solutions.
- 3) Investment of the municipality: The municipal investments in physical infrastructure (e.g. road, electricity and sewer) systems helped demonstrating the commitment of the municipality to the joint project.
- 4) Leadership based on openness, support, commitment, responsibility, courage and the willingness to take a step back and let things happen helped to give sufficient room to the private non-profit and for-profit actors.
- 5) Advertisement and branding: Advertising and branding the Musicon project was crucial for attracting private investors.

The *dialogue about budget cuts* was enhanced by many of the same success factors as the Musicon project. However, compared to the *Musicon project* these factors were mostly related to the organization of the dialogue instead of investment. Five different

factors related to the organization of the dialogue, culture, problem definition, timing and attention steering could be distinguished:

- 1) Clear organization of the dialogue: A transparent structure, rules of etiquette and management of expectations helped citizens to understand what they had become involved in.
- 2) Clear definition of the roles of the different actors: It was important for the participants to know who were involved when and how and what they were supposed to do.
- 3) Culture of the municipality: The municipality of Zeist was characterized by an organizational culture favorable to learning, trust and mutual support.
- 4) Problem definition: A clear definition of an urgent problem with repercussions for the daily life of the citizens was important to enhance participation.
- 5) Timing and attention steering: Finding the right time to have a dialogue vis-à-vis elections and other events proved to be crucial and getting all the council members, the mayor the aldermen and key public managers to focus on the dialogue process helped ensuring the dialogue had a real impact.

Although there are some differences between the success factors between the two cases, there are also several overlaps with pertaining to roles, vision and process. As such, leadership and institutional design seem to have a crucial impact in facilitating co-creation and producing desirable results. Other factors like the national and local traditions, the established political-administrative institutions and previous experiences might also have played a role, but at the end of the day, both municipalities produced successful outcomes of the co-creation processes that they initiated: The municipality of Roskilde created a new cultural neighborhood that so far contains a rock museum, a dance school, a music school, a technical school, an indoor- and outdoor skate park, music studios, several cafes and some small cultural start-ups. Next to that, the municipality of Zeist managed to save 6.2 million EUR in accordance with the plans that were developed with local citizens and stakeholders.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our study has analyzed the way that local municipalities initiate, facilitate and derive results from co-creation by means of studying a Danish and Dutch case. The pervasiveness of wicked and unruly problems co-creation might be a solution as it offers new ways of engaging local citizens and relevant stakeholders in the creation of innovative, effective and democratic solutions that draw on the resources and ideas of relevant and affected actors.

Our study has shown how citizen engagement is transformed with the growing appreciation of co-creation. It has also offered a framework for analyzing co-creation empha-

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sizing the basic rationale, the role of citizens, the institutional design and the exercise of public leadership. Our comparative empirical case study of co-creation processes in a Danish and Dutch municipality has demonstrated that co-creation engaged local actors in fruitful and productive ways that help local municipalities to deal with complex issues. Our analysis suggests that in both cases institutional design and transformational leadership are important levers that help to sustain the processes of co-creation and produce the kind of solutions that the municipalities were looking for.

We carefully designed the case study so as to test whether co-creation – as some might suspect – only works and lead to desired results in situations where public authorities want to spend money on developing new and creative solutions that citizens can contribute to without ending up in a zero-sum game where some win while other lose. Hence, the case study from the municipality in Zeist was chosen deliberately in order to explore whether co-creation fares in situations with dire fiscal constraints and the purpose is to implement massive budget cuts. Our studies suggest that co-creation is also a viable strategy in hard weather conditions. Hence, the dialogue about budget cuts is just as successful in finding acceptable ways of cutting the budget through engagement of local citizens as the Musicon project is in co-creating a new cultural and musical neighborhood. While it is far too early to conclude that co-creation is always a good strategy for problem solving, we can at least conclude that co-creation is not confined to good weather conditions.

Our study and results are not without limitations. We have only studied co-creation in countries with relatively favorable conditions and more studies from other areas and countries are needed to get a clearer picture of the viability of local co-creation strategies. Building a data bank with qualitative case studies of how complex problems are solved through multi-actor collaboration that reinvents citizen engagement in ways that ensure the mobilization of the citizens' knowledge and builds joint ownership over public solutions might be a way to advance knowledge in the expanding field of co-creation.

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*Appendix 1 Overview of the interviews**Dialogue about budget cuts*

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Date</b>
Interview 1	Mayor; executive board member	May 26, 2016
Interview 2	Council member actively involved in the dialogue	May 25, 2016
Interview 3	Council member actively involved in the dialogue	May 25, 2016
Interview 4	Project manager and founder dialogue about cuts	May 16, 2016
Interview 5	Management and policy advisor in the public administration	May 25, 2016
Interview 6	Representative of a social organization who participated in the dialogue	June 01, 2016
Interview 7	Citizen who participated in the dialogue	June 01, 2016

*Musicon project*

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Date</b>
Interview 8	City manager of the public administration	February 27, 2017
Interview 9	Urban planner Musicon in the public administration	February 21, 2017
Interview 10	Private developer and investor Musicon	February 23, 2017
Interview 11	Mayor; executive board member and council member	March 8, 2017
Interview 12	Founder of Musicon	February 28, 2017
Interview 13	Citizen who is an investor in Musicon	March 7, 2017

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