

Legitimacy of Local Co-Creation Under the Circumstances of Low Party Politicization

Klimovsky Daniel, Jaroslav Dvorak, Diana-Camelia Iancu

Abstract

Warren (2009) considers co-creation an example of governance-driven democratization. Unsurprisingly, although there is still a missing agreement what it means from practical point of view, this concept have attracted both policy makers, other stakeholders and researchers. One can see a clear differences between input-based co-creation and output-based co-creation. These two alternatives offer various benefits but, at the same time, are challenged by various pitfalls. Røiseland (2021) points out that a relationship between input-based co-creation and modern liberal democracy is particularly uneasy, because representative assemblies are usually organized around political parties and from this perspective the mentioned input-based co-creation is a kind of competing or alternative policy making framework. However, his analysis was based on cases in Denmark and Norway, and a closer look at the representation issue in the CEE region shows that many countries in this region belong to the group with low or even very low level of party politicization at local level. On this matter Gendźwiłł, Kjaer and Steyvers (2022) stress that independent candidates enjoy very permissive electoral rules in these countries. These fact open a nice research gap to be analysed: Is the input-based co-creation a successful alternative mechanism to “traditional” policy making under the circumstances of low party politicization? It is important to stress that besides to organizational and citizen influenced factors shaping co-creation, also the context itself shapes co-creation processes and outcomes, and this context is locally or nationally embedded (Osborne 2005, Fishkin 2009). Therefore, we also intend to argue on the role of legacy aspects, a dimension that has received some attention in the literature (e.g., Rasmussen 2015, Huxhley et al. 2016).

To respond the mentioned question, we have decided to conduct a comparative research across the whole CEE region, and we have identified interesting cases in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Co-creation has become a widely used method of policy making in some certain fields (e.g., social policy and social innovation, environmental protection, urban and spatial planning) in this region since the early 2000s (Broekema, Horlings & Bulder 2021, Nemeč et al. 2017). A multiple-case study method was used for analytical purposes and we would like to uncover a main source of legitimacy of co-creation practice under the circumstances of low party politicization. Within this context, we assume that co-creation under such circumstances is conditioned by the way the process is being designed, which in turn depends on the state–society relations and legacy.