From citizen engagement to co-production. Analysis of the concept and cases of public administration

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ES Resumen. La crisis económica del 2008 desencadenó un periodo de austeridad y desafíos socioeconómicos. Para la Administración Pública esto supuso, al menos, tres retos: a) mantener el mismo nivel de excelencia contando con menos recursos (Luoma-aho, 2007); b) sortear los problemas para satisfacer las demandas de la población (Thomas, 2013) y; c) afrontar la pérdida de confianza de los ciudadanos (Eurofound, 2013). La situación financiera obligó al sector público a repensar su forma de relacionarse con los ciudadanos. Esta investigación, basándose en la teoría de los bienes intangibles (Canel y Luoma-aho, 2017), estudia las diferencias entre el Compromiso Ciudadano y las fórmulas de coproducción y aporta sugerencias para el desarrollo de la cooperación entre instituciones públicas y ciudadanos.

Palabras clave: Coproducción; Compromiso ciudadano; Administración pública; Gobernanza.

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ENG Abstract. The 2008 economic crisis triggered a period of austerity, risks and socio-economic challenges. In the case of the Public Administration, this could mean, at least, three challenges: a) maintaining the same level of excellence with fewer resources (Luoma- aho, 2007); b) address the challenges to satisfy the demands of the population (Thomas, 2013) and; c) face the loss of trust that citizens have in the Public Administration (Eurofound, 2013). In short, the financial situation forced the public sector to rethink its way of relating to citizens. This research, based on the theory of intangible assets (Canel and Luoma-aho, 2017), studies the differences between citizen engagement and co-production actions and provides suggestions for the development of cooperation between public institutions and citizens.

Keywords: Co-production; Citizen engagement; Public administration; Governance.

Summary: 1. Introduction. Citizen Engagement in the public sector. 2.1. Expressions of Citizen Engagement. 3. Co-production in the public sector. 3.1 Expressions of co-production 4. From engagement to co-production: from voters to co-producers. 5. Methodology. 5.1 Approach. 5.2. Research objectives. 5.3. Research questions and hypotheses. 6. Results. 7. Conclusions. 8. Recommendations.

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1. Introduction

Since the early 1980s and up to the present day, the involvement of citizens in public life has been a recurrent subject of study in the academic literature (Parks, Baker, Kiser, Oakerson, Ostrom, E., Ostrom, V., Percy, Vandivort, Whitaker, & Wilson, 1981; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000; Marlowe & Arrington-Marlowe, 2005; Bovaird, 2007; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012a, 2012b, 2016; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014; Tuurnas, 2015; Brandsen and Honingh, 2016, among others). In theoretical terms, such involvement is called Citizen Engagement (Goetz and Jenkins, 2001; Carpini, Cook and Jacobs, 2004; Reddel and Woolcock, 2004; Roberts, 2004). In practical terms, engagement has been defined on the basis of actions such as: reading newspapers, attending public meetings, voting, participating in organizations and labor unions, volunteering or supporting actions, as well as the following actions to research for social purposes and involvement in governance processes (Verba and Nie, 1972; Putnam, 1995; Brady, 1999; Ekman and Amna, 2012).

The relevance that each of these actions has for the quality of democracy is unquestionable in academic literature (Carpini et. al, 2004; Cooper, 2005; Cooper, Bryer, Meek, 2006; Dahlgren 2009, among others), ensuring that a more participatory and compromised society is a more employed, informed and empowered society (Marlowe Jr. and Arrington Marlowe, 2005).

In light the of research of the Citizen Engagement, some authors have agreed in emphasizing, also, the disaffection of citizens with the Public Administration and, therefore, the decrease in the levels of public participation (Galston, 1970; Putnam, 2000). Galston ensures that "in the early 1970s, about half of those aged from 18 to 29 in the United States voted for the presidential elections. In 1996, less than one-third" (2001: 219). Putnam (2000) affirms, in this sense, that the public's engagement to the Administration has eroded so abruptly that it is imperative to rethink, revive and redefine it.

Putnam's engagement to redefine what we understand by *engagement* opens the way to question whether the expression of engagement is unique or whether it accepts different forms of participation and, also, whether if it's necessary for the public administration to develop new strategies to relate to its public. Both are questions raised in this research.

This article is based on the idea that the construction of Citizen Engagement depends on the public sector "reconceptualizing the provision of services as a social construction process in which the actors of self-organizing systems negotiate the rules, norms and institutional frameworks instead of taking the rules of the game as a given" (Bovaird, 2007: 858). In this sense, it is argued that co-production is an advanced form of engagement that can contribute to recovering the now worn-out relationship between citizens and public administration.

After the study of several case studies of co-production measures and with the support of theory, the aim is to:

1) determine which actions trigger Citizen Engagement and which can be considered as co-production actions; 2) shed light on the hypothesis that the Administration is capable of developing stronger and more committed relationships with its public through co-production actions; 3) suggest recommendations for the implementation of joint actions between citizens and the public administration.

2. Citizen Engagement in the public sector

We must begin with three considerations about the use of the term Citizen Engagement in this article:

– Because engagement is a widely accepted term in academic literature, we will use the term indisputably engagement or commitment. However, it should be noted that "commitment" does not define the concept of engagement in its entirety.
– The idea of engagement is built on different aspects. Citizen Engagement is one of them and is the focus of this publication.
– To indicate the consideration of Citizen Engagement as an intangible asset, its first letter will be capitalized.

The simplest definition of commitment, found in several dictionaries, refers to the action of committing or the state by which one is committed. In the academic field, the literature is extensive and varied, so, for ease of exposition, we will classify it according to two perspectives: a) contributions that define a committed citizen as an individual who voluntarily decides to participate in a public matter (Verba and Nie, 1972; Brady, 1999; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Cooper, 2005; Teorell, Torcal and Montero, 2007); b) contributions that highlight the fundamental role of public administration in getting citizens involved in public affairs (Marlowe Jr, and Arrington-Marlowe, 2005; Yang and Callahan, 2007; Claes and Hooghe; 2008).

Within the first group, the authors derive the responsibility for action to the citizen himself (Table 1), arguing that the people who want to become involved in public actions do it from their own free will and are solely motivated by their possible capacity to influence political, social or public affairs.

The authors of the second group understand Citizen Engagement as an action that should be promoted by the public administration. In this sense, Keeter, Zukin, Andolina and Jenkins (2002: 2), upon the progressive loss in the levels of engagement of young people with the public sector, they concluded that the problem lays in the Administration's lack of intention to involve them in public activity:

Engaged citizens do not create themselves. We should no more expect spontaneous engagement than we do spontaneous combustion. The norms of the culture are against the former, just as the laws of physics are against the latter […]. Young people need help to get involved.

With a very similar conceptualization, Yang and Callahan (2007: 249) referred to the term "citizen involvement efforts" as "activities initiated by government to encourage citizen participation in administrative decision-making and managerial processes". From their reflections we can deduce that the decision to participate is ultimately the citizens' response to an initiative of the administration.

The vision of these authors joins the definitions from Marlowe and Arrington-Marlowe (2005) and Claes and Hooghe (2008), for whom commitment needs a source

Table 1. Recent definitions of the term co-production.

Piqueiras Conlledo (2019)	Definition
Verba and Nie (1972: 56-63)	They identify Citizen Engagement with "'systems' by which the citizen can influence the government".
Brady (1999: 737)	Engagement is an "action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes".
Cooper (2005: 534)	Engaged people are "people participating together for deliberation and collective action within an array of interests, institutions and networks, developing civic identity, and involving people in governance processes".
Adler and Goggin (2005: 241)	Citizen Engagement is defined by "activities done by ordinary citizens that aim to influence what is of interest to others, outside one's own family and circle of close friends"; to which they add that "an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future".

Source: Own elaboration.

of impact that generates it. The authors argue that citizens require extra motivation that leads them to want to be involved in the public field. It seems that this impulse, according to the visions described, should come from the public administration.

In addition to the two distinctions made in the Academy, the concept of Citizen Engagement also appears as an object of study in the field of organizations. The World Bank, jointly with CIVICUS[2] and InterAction[3], organized a conference in 2013 on Citizen Engagement to highlight the value of the Administration engaging with citizens if it intends to achieve effective development (World Bank, 2014). In that document, engagement was defined as "two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector within the scope of WBG interventions—policy dialogue, programs, projects, and advisory services and analytics—that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving the intermediate and final development outcomes of the intervention" (World Bank, 2014: 8).

The definition was completed with a two-axis plan that was related to the level of involvement that governments allow citizens to have in decision-making (and, therefore, the authority they grant them) and the level of interaction of governments with their publics (Figure 1). On this basis, advancing in the levels of engagement involves climbing a ladder with the following steps:

1. Inform: provide citizens with fair and objective information to help them understand the existing problem, alternatives and solutions);
2. Consult: seek feedback from citizens;
3. Collaborate: involve citizens in decision-making;
4. Empower: leave the final decision in the hands of citizens.

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[2] International non-profit organization, which describes itself as "a global alliance dedicated to strengthen citizen action and civil society around the world".

[3] Alliance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a base in Washington, D.C.

Two ideas can be considered regarding the concept of Citizen Engagement proposed by the World Bank. The first is that progress in the degree of engagement implies a higher level of interaction between public organizations and citizens; the second is that prospering also implies a handover of power to society from public authorities. Thus, engagement takes on much greater implications than those described by the first authors (Verba and Nie, 1972; Brady, 1999; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Cooper, 2005; Teorell, Torcal and Montero, 2007). It is no longer only up to the citizen to intervene in public life, but, in order to advance as a society, the Administration must give citizens a space in which they can participate actively and jointly improve public services. The World Bank is talking about a more evolved engagement, a new way of understanding collaboration.

2.1. Expressions of Citizen Engagement

The levels of participation in public affairs have been considered by the authors as an indicative of the level of engagement. Therefore, the more and greater assiduously citizens participate, the more engaged they will be with policies and with society itself (Brady, 1999; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Cooper, 2005; Claes and Hooghe 2008, among others). However, not all forms of participation are equal, and literature has suggested a distinction between political actions and public actions. The former refer to actions taken "by citizens with the intent of affecting specific political results" (Brady, 1999: 737).
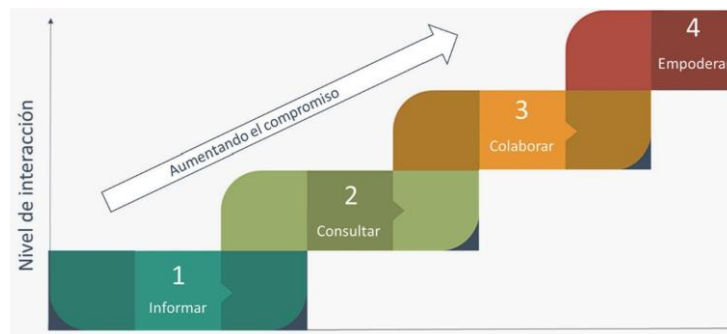

Figure 1. The World Bank's ladder of citizen participation.

The ones in second place are related to tasks that seek the benefit of the community and are expressed through solidarity behaviors (Ekman and Amna, 2012).

These two types of expressions of Citizen Engagement have also been referred to as manifest and latent actions (Table 2). The first ones are related to traditional behaviors, meaning, what in practice directly concerns political actions. The second one supports the idea that citizens not only interact with public life to express their political choices (Ekman and Amna, 2012), but also engage in public or social actions (e.g., volunteer work, donating money or helping others).

As noted above, there is a generalized appreciation among authors that levels of participation and, therefore, engagement has declined over generations (Dalton, 1998, 2006, 2008; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Galston, 2001). However, the authors who notify an exhaustion in the forms of participation only refer to overt actions. Thus, Galston (2001) or Putnam (2000) indicate in their research the decreases in the levels of electoral participation. At the same time, there are other authors who argue that this worrisome view on the loss of civic engagement is premature (Norris, 2002, 2003; Stolle and Hooge, 2005; Berger, 2009).

The dissonance between the two groups of authors is due to their conception of participation. While for Putnam (2000) and Galston (2001) this is about political engagement, Norris (2002, 2003), Stolle and Hooge (2005) and Berger (2009) take into account the latent forms of expression and play down the importance of the decline in electoral participation rates.

Far from these discrepancies, what the authors do agree on is to emphasize that both forms of testing are a necessary mechanism for public sector organizations to better understand the desires, needs and expectations from their citizens (Holmes, 2011).

3. Co-production in the public sector

Co-production became part of the public administration terminology in the 1970s, when Ostrom (1972) used the expression to explain the direct work of citizens in the production of public services. The prefix "co" announces that the production of services requires the collaboration of at least two actors: "regular producers" (government professionals) and "citizen producers" or

	Description	Example of action
MANIFEST Forms	They are based on the model of "service citizens": citizens act according to the rules and on the basis of what they feel they "should" do.	Voting, social order compliance or political party affiliation.
LATENT Forms	They are based on the model of "engaged citizens": participation expressed through solidarity aid, political independence and civil society activity.	Donation of money to charity, volunteering, participation in the public field, participation in debates, etc.

Source: Piqueiras Conlledo (2019: 78).

"co-producers" (citizens who voluntarily participate individually or in groups) (Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicilia, 2017). Such relationship implies necessarily a transfer of power from the Administration to the citizens to "help reduce costs and improve the quality of services provided to them" (Nabatchi et al., 2017: 767).

Since then, many authors have defined the term (Table 3) and conceptualized it as an effective solution to the challenges faced by the public administration (Nabatchi and Leighninger, 2015). This is especially evident at local level; municipalities tend to give society a more relevant role to get involved in community affairs, offering them the possibility to cooperate in finding solutions to the challenges they face (Fung, 2007). This is how different forms of co-production emerge in practice and how tools are developed to organize it successfully.

Co-production is the "manifestation of an emerging governance paradigm in which collaboration and participation are more central" (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014 cited in Brandsen and Honingh, 2016: 427). In this new paradigm, the role of the citizen is essential, thanks to the extensive knowledge of their environment, that allows them to be aware of the daily needs therein. In addition, his willingness to help with his "time", "energy" and "capabilities" (Bovaird y Loeffler, 2012, p. 1122) makes the contributor "potentially valuable contributors to their communities, not simply supplicants" (2012: 1122).

Although it seems clear that the use of co-production measures is rising, it still has empirical challenges (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012a, 2012b, 2016; Bovaird et al., 2015; Brandsen and Honingh, 2016; Tuurnas, 2015). Citizens, dissatisfied with the role of the Administration, especially since the economic crisis, are not satisfied with the possibility of being involved in public affairs because "still not satisfied with the public services which it is being offered" (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012a:1120). Trust and satisfaction with public services are considered fundamental concepts engaging in an activity with the public administration (Yang and Callahan, 2007; Van der Walle, Van Roosbroek and Bouckaert, 2008; Dahlgren, 2009, among others).

Co-production measures can be a solution in which both the Administration and the administered obtain benefits: by informing citizens about public services that do not work or work poorly, as well as by investing their own time to solve these deficits, the Administration manages to reduce public resources while delivering higher quality services. For their part, there is an increase of satisfaction among citizens. However, for these measures to be successful, true collaboration between the state and citizens is required.

3.1 Expressions of co-production

The current tendency, both from the perspective of public administrators and academic members, favors the increasing attention to co-production, which has led to different classifications of actions (from the planning phase of the service to its evaluation once delivered).

The most widespread and varied typology is the one suggested by Bovaird (2007), consisting of seven different types of co-production that exemplify the role of the different actors, and the co-production relationships established among them (Table 4).

Prior to its presentation, it should be clarified that the literature on co-production uses the terms "professionals" or "experts" to refer to officials and the term "users" to refer to citizens or the public receiving services.

Other recent typologies, such as Nabatchi (et al., 2017), aim for a simplification of this classification (Table 5).

Piqueiras Conlledo (2019)	Definition
Bovaird (2007: 847)	"The 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 contributions of resources".

Alford (2009: 23)	"It is any active behavior by any person outside government that: is performed in conjunction with government or independently, but is motivated by some action; the behavior is at least partially voluntary and; [that behavior] intentionally creates value".
Brandsen and Honingh (2016: 431).	"It is a relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that require a direct and active contribution of these citizens to the work of the organization".
Surva, Tõnurist and Lember (2016: 1031).	"A way to involve citizens as co-designers and co-implementers of services that are usually provided by public organizations".

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4. Typology of co-production.

Typology	Description	Examples
Co-planning and co-design	Citizens participate in planning and design, although services are provided by professionals.	Participatory budgeting.
Co-delivery of services	Professionals design and plan the service, but users deliver it.	Volunteers in the hospitals who complement the professional staff.
Complete user-professional co-production	All stakeholders (users and professionals) share tasks.	Joint neighbor-police surveillance schemes.
Co-delivery of services, without formal planning or design	Users take responsibility for the service but ask for professional help when necessary.	Neighbors who organize leisure activities and ask for help for specific events.
Exclusive presentation of professionally planned services	Users are responsible for the presentation of professionally planned services.	Families that care for the elderly and provide home care services.
Exclusive presentation of co-planned services	Users provide services that they also plan and design.	Rural service points staffed by volunteers
Traditional self-organized community	Professional staff has no direct involvement in the services.	Children's playgroups, food cooperatives, etc.

Source: Bovaird (2007: 849-850).

Four forms of co-production are proposed based on the strategic identification of services, their design, delivery and evaluation.

Co-production aims to connect with some "of the philosophical roots of public service", in the sense that it succeeds into building public services "for everyone according to their needs", using all actors "according to their abilities" (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012b: 35). It also responds, in part, to a need from the public administration to improve the quality of its services and to a self-recognition of its own limitations in doing so (budgets, personnel, etc.). The total of these two issues positions the co-production as an act of willingness of both users and professionals to work together in search of results that, for the most part, are identified as good or beneficial.

This document analyses several practical cases in which co-production, in its different forms, has contributed to improving the quality of life in citizens.

4. From engagement to co-production: from voters to co-producers

Until the 1980s, "public services were essentially seen as activities which professionals did to, or for, members of the public to achieve results" (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012a: 1120). Thus, the relationship between society and the state was

Table 5. Types of co-production.

Typology	Description	Examples
Co-commission	"Activities aimed to strategically identify and prioritize needed public services, outcomes and users".	Collaborative works to establish budget priorities

Co-design	"Activities that incorporate the experience of users and their communities in the creation, planning or organization of public services".	Collaborative works to improve the quality of life of the elderly.
Co-delivery	"Joint activities used to directly provide public services and/or to improve their delivery".	Work between parents and teachers to offer extracurricular activities.
Co-evaluation	"It focuses on the monitoring and evaluation of public services" by both state actors and citizens.	Residents in social housing that serve as "tenant advisors".

Source: Nabatchi et al. (2017: 771-772).

limited, practically, to voting processes. Nowadays, citizens can participate in and from services that are designed to, in addition to producing results, be of value to the community.

This paradigm shift has been referred to by Bovaird and Loeffler (2012a:1120) as the era of "public services BY the public". During the process of change (Table 6) we have gone through different stages in which the citizen has played different roles related to the Administration:

a) The first paradigm which was developed in the 1960's corresponds to the traditional representative democracy. In this system, citizens only have a voice during elections and are conceived as passive actors whose decision-making power in public life is restricted to participation in regular elections (Held, 2006);
b) The New Public Management theory emerged in the 1980s with a new conception of the citizen. It was seen as an actor with equal desires and needs, which meant that citizens were able to choose the services they wanted to use and also the providers they wanted to be provided with. The new scenario forced the public administration to strive to offer quality, efficient and effective services (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg 2014);
c) The role of citizens in civil and political society has evolved in recent years towards a new model of collaboration (co-production). It introduces the concept of a citizen who continues to have desires and needs and who, in addition, has responsibilities. Among them is the contribution to the improvement of his or her society. Thus, bidirectionality is introduced in the delivery of public services, involving citizens and users actively in a process that, until then, was dominated solely by politicians.

It is possible to situate the concept of Citizen Engagement both in the first phase (representative democracy) and in the New Public Management stage. Based on the literature (Held, 2006; Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012a, 2012b; Bryson et al., 2014), we claim that the mechanisms of participation during the representative democracy were political or overt, while the latent conception of engagement appeared during the second stage (citizens adopt a more social position but do not build volunteer actions together with the Administration, but rather organize themselves into groups or act individually on their own initiative).

In this evolution, the concept of co-production can be clearly identified at the bottom of the chain. This stage represents the "manifestation of an emerging governance paradigm in which collaboration and participation are more central" (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg, 2014 cited in Brandsen and Honingh, 2016: 427).

This progressive interest in making citizens evolve from voters to co-producers grows, in part, alongside with the development of the economic and financial crisis. The decade since the outbreak of the recession has been accompanied by a "crisis of the euro zone" (Eurofound, 2018b: 1). It seems that addressing the quality of public services by relying on the opinion and collaboration of citizens can be a way to strengthen the overall trust in institutions.

The social and political advantages of public participation (understood in the same sense for these authors as Citizen Engagement) are a key part of the context of representative democracies. However, Marlowe and Arrington-Marlowe recommend remembering that forms of participation are complementary to political decisions, i.e., the purpose of promoting citizen engagement with government is to foster more informed and critical citizens who can be useful for the public sector to better manage resources. This is not intended to replace policy makers and their accountability, but to assist them in public decision-making (Marlowe Jr. and Arrington-Marlowe, 2005).

5. Methodology
The analysis developed in this research provides a comparative study of six collected cases from the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) database and the Governance International (GI) website.

Table 6. Evolution of the role of citizens in public life.

	Representative democracy	New Public Management	Co-production
Role of citizens	Voters with an opinion	Citizens with needs and desires	Active and involved citizens

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 7. Description of the analyzed cases.

Case	Place, year	Problems to be faced	Solution applied
"Peer Educators Fighting Underage Pregnancy in Lambeth"	Lambeth, England, 2002	Lamberth had a high teenage pregnancy rate.	Over the course of eight years, around 250 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 19 were trained by the local administration so that these same youngsters could then give talks on sex education in schools.
"Scottish Housing Regulation"	Scotland, 2004	That the tenants of social housing could have real testimonies of what life is like in social housing.	Municipalities organized volunteer groups composed of social housing tenants to work as "advisors" to the new tenants of these houses. In this way, they could provide them with quality information.
"You Decide!"	London, England, 2009	Political disaffection and dissatisfaction with the Administration on the part of citizens.	"You Decide!" is a participatory budgeting program carried out in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It consisted of eight events held over a four-month period in which 815 residents used 2.4 million pounds from the municipal budget to improve public services.
"¡Participa Andalucía!"	Andalusia, Spain, 2010	1) Difficulties in channeling the needs that the citizens demanded from the public administration. 2) Lack of a common system to carry out homogeneous e-Democracy systems.	Creation of an online platform, with quick and easy access, for citizens to send their needs, concerns and opinions about public services to the mayors of their municipalities.
"CI.VI.VO"	Rimini, Italy, 2011	Rimini is a popular tourist destination and home to almost 150,000 citizens. One of them, Pier Paolo Cavessi, was dissatisfied with the state of a park near his home and decided to start taking care of it and cleaning it up.	The Municipality of Rimini created the NGO CI.VI.VO. (CIvico, VIcino, Voluntario) to support this neighbor's initiative and allowed any citizen who wanted to participate to join in. The acronym stands for "I live here" and the three words that make it up represent "civic, neighbor, volunteer".
"#whatsyourstory"	Leeds, England, 2015	There was a low number of visitors to the city's public libraries and little use of the resources offered in them.	Management and citizens jointly developed a public relations strategy for library users to tell their own stories and how this public service had played an important role in personal achievements.

Source: Own elaboration.

For the selection of cases, four premises were considered: 1) that the initiative for the co-production action came from a public institution; 2) the type of problem or need that motivated the action; 3) the public involved or social groups participating; and 4) the benefits obtained.

5.1 Approach

In total, six cases of co-production developed in Europe have been chosen and studied: four in England, one in Spain, one in Italy and one in Scotland[4]. The six examples are described below, providing the problem or need faced by the community before the implementation of the co-production action and the solution initiated by the public administration to solve it (Table 7):

Generally speaking, there are cases in which public administrations, almost always at the local level, implement measures to increase citizen participation to improve community spaces or implement programs to help their fellow citizens. The reason for these initiatives is usually linked to the feeling of political delegitimization and lack of interest of citizens in public life, which, as a result, leads to a lack of social participation.

The most prominent data from the examples studied are compiled in Table 8. The following are described: the institutions implementing the co-production actions, the years in which these actions were initiated, the problems

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[4] The data are obtained from secondary sources, so an analysis of cases compiled by other agencies and not collected by firsthand is proposed. Although the ideal would have been to collect them by our own means, this option was impossible due to the difficulty involved and the economic resources involved.

that the Administration sought to solve, the objectives pursued with the inclusion of the citizens in the actions, and the issues that have arisen when studying the co-production programs and/or searching for data.

Table 8. Summary of analyzed data.

Implementing Institutions	− Local institutions: Municipalities − Autonomous Institutions: Regional Ministries
Dates	From 2002 to 2015
Problems to be solved	− Difficulties in channeling the needs that citizens demand from the public administration. − Lack of instruments to help citizens direct their interests, needs and motivations to public decision-makers, who are in charge of defining, elaborating and implementing policies. − Lack of citizen interest in public affairs. − Delegitimization of the political class.
Objectives	− Promote measures to encourage citizen participation. − Develop the corresponding instruments to facilitate citizen intervention. − Deepen the approach between institutions and citizens. − Encourage associative life and sensitivity to public services.
Audiences	All citizens
Research problems	Empirical data is scarce, so there is almost no evidence of specific results after the implementation of co-production actions.

Source: Own elaboration.

The co-production actions have been selected based on the typology of Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicilia (2017), compiled in Table 5, so that each of the cases studied has been identified with an action of co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery or co-evaluation of services. In the cases analyzed, co-production measures have been recorded at all levels.

5.2 Research objectives

The following objectives were pursued in the case review:

- To identify the actions and/or processes developed by the public administration as co-production measures.
- To identify the benefits of co-production in today's societies.
- To determine whether the Administration is capable of developing stronger and more committed relationships with its audiences through co-production actions.

5.3 Research questions and hypotheses

Next, the research questions are presented, and the associated hypotheses are described:

1) Is there a difference between Citizen Engagement actions and co-production actions?

The answer to this question is obtained through a study of the literature that allows us to understand both concepts. On the one hand, co-production is understood as a conjoined action between citizens and the Administration where both of them participate by contributing resources and, in the other hand, the concept of Citizen Engagement has been described in two senses: a) as a political or overt action carried out by the citizen who wants to get involved and; b) as a public or latent action carried out by the citizen who seeks to help improve his or her community. From the literature review, the conceptual bases have been extracted to identify which behavioral and attitude measures can evidence Citizen Engagement and which ones can evidence co-production.

Based on the theoretical framework, the first hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 1: It is possible to deduce the Citizen Engagement and the co-production of a set of individual attitudes and behaviors of citizens.

2) Does co-production produce benefits for society and the public administration?

The study of specific cases of co-production actions helps to answer this question. The second hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 2: Co-production does produce benefits for both parties (citizens and public administration).

3) Is the public administration capable of developing stronger relationships with its citizens through co-production actions?

The answer can be given after the study of the cases and the conclusions and evaluations obtained from them (whether they are external evaluations to the Administration or by inhouse body). The third hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 3: Thanks to the implementation of co-production actions, the relations between citizens and the public administration are improved.

6. Results

The results of the study of the co-production cases and their relationship with the theory explained above are presented below. The following scheme is used for their display:

1. Situation of the public administration prior to the implementation of a co-production action;
2. Actions developed that are related to the concept of co-production;
3. Classification of the studied cases according to the typology of actions established by the authors;
4. List of the objectives achieved by the Administration following a co-production action.

In detail it is expressed as follows:

1. The problems that the public administration tries to solve are common in all cases. Specifically, when the public administration sets in motion a co-production action when it identifies that:

   - There are difficulties in channeling, at the municipal level, the needs that citizens demand from the Administration, and there are shortcomings in the instruments that help these messages reach the public decision-makers in charge of defining, developing and implementing public policies;
   - There is no common system in the local entities to implement homogeneous systems that enable the citizen-institution relationship through digital media;
   - There is a political disaffection among citizens and a great lack of interest in getting involved in public life;
   - The Administration is facing a generation that is not sensitized to public services;
   - There is a distance between citizens and public institutions.

2. For each of the problems or needs, the Administration deploys one or more specific actions. In such a way that:

   - For the problems of channeling citizen needs, online platforms for communication between the two actors (citizens-Administration) are usually developed;
   - In view of the lack of a common system in local entities to implement homogeneous systems that make possible the citizen-institution relationship, it has been decided to develop a new system that would allow for a more efficient use of the resources available. The new laws provide a series of instruments so that citizens can participate in public policies, making their demands known to government officials and establishing a series of institutional guarantees that allow this participation to be effective;
   - To address political disaffection and lack of interest from the citizens, volunteer measures are activated through which citizens can become involved in tasks that benefit society;
   - In cases where a municipality detects a problem of awareness of public services, groups of volunteers are set up to explain to them what services the public entity offers, how much it costs to maintain them and how they can contribute to their improvement with the help of citizens;
   - When the Administration detects a gap with its citizens, it implements management, implementation and service delivery measures.

3. Based on the classification of Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicilia (2017), we can organize the six case studies according to the four groups established by the authors:

   - Co-commission: This section contains case studies that seek to learn directly about the needs of citizens. Thus, we include: "¡Participa Andalucía!" and "You Decide! In Tower Hamlets". The objective of both cases was to create channels of communication with citizens so that the public administration could have information that would help to improve public services.
   - Co-design: The case included in this section is developed thanks to the joint work of administration and citizens for the design of public services. We include the example of "#whatsyourstory". In the Leeds initiative, the careful strategic planning of the content aimed at social media was designed jointly by the administration and citizens. The result was not only that the library gained users, but that users also made connections with each other.
   - Co-delivery: The cases included in this section are "Peer Educators Fighting Under-age Pregnancy in Lambeth" (youngsters were trained by sex education specialists to combat the high rates of underage pregnancies through talks that they themselves would later give in institutions) and "CI.VI.VO. in Rimini" (a collaboration between the public body and citizens in the cleaning and maintenance of the city's public places).
   - Co-evaluation: The Scottish Housing Regulation program facilitated social housing tenants to work for the council as "advisors" with the aim of helping future social tenants. Volunteers were able to evaluate the service they were receiving from social services, while also providing the information necessary to the people who were going to live there.

4. The last of the blocks of results is built around the objectives achieved in the actions studied. After its study it can be determined that:

- "¡Participa Andalucía!" was a recognized success. More than 30% of Andalusian municipalities signed up to the project and around one seventh of the citizens used the tool at some time. At the time of the initiative's consultation (2016), more than 1,000 proposals related to urban planning, social services and citizen security, among others, had been registered. The platform allowed administrators to better understand citizens needs and provided society with a greater degree of information regarding the lines of action being followed in their municipality.
- "You Decide! In Tower Hamlets" was characterized by allowing residents to deliberate on services with other members of their community and to decide which services should be purchased. The citizens' evaluation was positive following the £2.4 million investment.
- The impact of "#whatsyourstory" reached far beyond Leeds, with positive interactions in Austria, Canada and the U.S. The use of the online library increased dramatically, and the library's social media networks increased in the number of followers.
- The "Peer Educators Fighting Underage Pregnancy in Lambeth" initiative received very favorable feedback from the young participants and was backed up by data: the under-18 conception rate in Lambeth fell by 26% in the year of the action's implementation, a faster rate than in other parts of London.
- Along the same lines, "CI.VI.VO." led to a wave of volunteers who participated especially in schoolyard maintenance, cleaning of parks, organization of social activities, etc. In the evaluation of the initiative, the Administration acknowledged savings in cleaning services and citizens perceived their city as a cleaner and more livable place.
- An evaluation of the "Scottish Housing Regulation" program by the local council found that the initiative had been well received and was described as very positive by the inspection teams, the public institution's staff and the tenants themselves. The inspection teams (volunteers) felt useful within their community. The public institution offered a new quality service at no cost. The new tenants were grateful to have had accurate information from the own experiences of volunteers.

Based on these results, the three hypotheses can be confirmed:

Hypothesis 1: The theoretical study of both concepts allows us to confirm that the actions of Civic Engagement and co-production actions are different and that different behaviors are derived from them.

Actions that demonstrate engagement are linked to the voluntary decision of individuals to become involved in public life without the administration implementing a specific initiative or participating with them. Moreover, they are expressed in two ways: a) political actions (e.g., voting); b) public actions (volunteering, concern for the environment expressed in recycling actions, etc.).

On the other hand, co-production actions, although they also occur when the individual is willing to get involved, which has the peculiarity that they are provoked by a public body with the aim of influencing the quality of life of the community thanks to the help of its citizens. In this case, a relationship is established between the administrator and the administered that does not occur, in any case, by performing an action that only expresses engagement (*see section 2.1*).

Hypothesis 2: After analyzing the results, the hypothesis that co-production produces benefits for both parties is accepted: the public administration gained visibility and managed to reduce the public resources allocated to certain activities thanks to the fact that citizens collaborated in public tasks. In the same way, the inhabitants of the communities studied were able to solve common problems and channel their relationship with the Administration through the opening of new channels of communication.

Hypothesis 3: The results also allow us to conclude that co-production actions contribute to the improvement of relations between citizens and the public administration. For a co-production action to take place, it is necessary for the two parties to have mutual trust: citizens must trust that the participation offered to them is serious and beneficial to them; the Public Administration must demonstrate that it trusts the capabilities of citizens by ceding them a certain degree of responsibility in decision-making. It is this mutual trust that allows relationships to grow closer.

7. Conclusions

According to the results obtained, we can divide the conclusions into several blocks:

- *Co-production actions contribute to increasing social capital.* It can be concluded that actions carried out jointly enable citizens to become involved in civic work, meaning that they become more aware of their environment and adopt a greater critical capacity.

- *Co-production actions contribute to an increase of mutual trust and legitimacy.* As a consequence of the first conclusion, it is confirmed that such actions increase mutual trust (citizen-administration) and, with it, the perception of legitimacy: co-production actions help to eliminate the belief that citizens lack competence, skill, experience and interest in participation, while ending the idea of unwillingness on the part of administrators to share power.

- *The perception of usefulness and efficiency that citizens have of public institutions is reinforced.* The examples above help us to corroborate the fact that encouraging direct communication between citizens and institutions helps the public administration to be more aware of their wishes and needs and, as a

result, optimizes resources so that the provision of services is optimal and their quality increases. In addition, mutual participation and collaboration can help reach consensus on future policies that contribute to the creation of strategic plans.

- *Promotes social cohesion.* This implies the creation of a feeling of unity and orientation towards the common good that has a positive impact on subjective well-being, thus contributing to improving the lives of citizens. In addition to being understood as an objective to which the Administration should aspire, it has a value that goes beyond this: it can foster and improve citizens abilities to reach a consensus, resolve conflicts or take responsibility and care for public spaces.

8. Recommendations

Here are some recommendations that we hope will serve as a contribution:

— For a co-production action to be effective, full involvement of the public organization in it is recommended. The success of these actions is closely linked to the development of a sense of common purpose.

— Communication is a central area of the process. In any of the co-production typologies, it is necessary to correctly implement communication channels that allow the bidirectional flow of information between citizens and the Administration.

— Creativity is fundamental. To engage audiences, a good dose of innovation and creative processes that attract their attention are needed, especially at the present time, when international information warns of a decline in the levels of interest in politics and public affairs (Eurofound, 2013, Eurofound, 2018a, Eurofound, 2018b).

— In this sense, monitoring the degree of citizen participation and their political disengagement can provide public administrators with useful information to generate opportunities of dialogue with them.

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