CHAPTER 5

Challenges to Effective Co-production
of Public Services and Outcomes

5.1 Introduction

If a systematic and thorough implementation of user and community co-production is potentially highly effective and can bring a wide range of benefits, as highlighted in Chapter 4, why is it not universally happening? In this chapter we will focus on possible reasons for the ‘implementation gap’ in co-production, in spite of the widespread acceptance that it should be embedded in the theory and practice of public services.

Specifically, we look at the challenges facing co-production, including the obstacles which it faces and the risks which are involved in taking a more co-production-oriented approach to public services and outcomes. We focus also on potential strategies for tackling these challenges and dealing with these risks. In particular, we explore how risk enablement and a whole system resilience network can help to make co-production more attractive to public service decision makers.

This chapter also discusses the triggers for motivation of citizen co-producers and the requirements of effective leadership for co-production, both in the community and in public service organisations. A core change management tool (the Governance International Co-production Star) is suggested as a way of both understanding and also tackling the implementation gap.

Finally, the chapter considers how co-production can have negative consequences, including ways in which it can fail to achieve the quality-of-life outcome improvements it seeks, the possibility that it will contravene
key public governance principles and the existence of a ‘dark side’ of co-production, whereby its implementation may involve illegal or immoral actions by public services staff, or service users or the community.

5.2 Overcoming the Implementation Gap in Co-production

5.2.1 Identifying Barriers to Citizen Co-production

While there is now growing worldwide interest in the potential of user and community co-production for improving public services and increasing publicly-desired outcomes, policymakers and practitioners are finding co-production to be very challenging to put into practice. Even when adopted as a policy commitment, a range of major barriers often appear to block the adoption of co-production initiatives as quickly and widely as initially hoped.

These barriers arise from several sources—for example, it is often suggested that co-production has been hindered because of the risks attached to greater user involvement in public services, or because of the pressure to generate short-term budget savings, or because of the potentially unfair burdens placed by co-production on vulnerable service users, or because of the resistance of some professional staff to changes in their practice and their power base, or because of the costs of supporting citizens and training staff in more effective co-production practices. However, there has so far not been a systematic exploration of how serious these barriers are in practice, so the literature on barriers to co-production is rather thin. Nor has there been much investigation of how public service organisations have gone about tackling these barriers. This section therefore seeks to provide a conceptual framework for understanding potential barriers to co-production.

From our review of the literature we have derived two ‘macro-propositions’ which have shaped our development of this conceptual model.

First proposition: Given the lack of evidence on effective pathways and barriers to improved outcomes through citizen co-production, we need to focus on perceived barriers to effective citizen co-production, rather than actual barriers. Further empirical testing is urgently needed to identify which specific factors are perceived as barriers in the minds of particular stakeholders. Nevertheless, in the longer-term our research programme
aims to identify what actual co-production barriers tend to be found in different contexts, based on comparative research across different public services and countries.

Second proposition: Not all factors which are considered as ‘drivers’ of citizen co-production are necessarily ‘barriers’ to co-production, when they are lacking. This proposition responds to the claim made in some of the literature that ‘barriers’ are simply the obverse or absence of ‘drivers’. Some research on the enabling environments for social innovation (Bloch et al. 2010) is helpful in showing aspects of context which are important in promoting co-production—and that co-production is therefore more difficult in their absence. Moreover, some drivers of co-production seem to be so important that their absence clearly makes co-production less effective. However, this is not always the case. For example, while specific legislation promoting co-production can be considered as a driver of citizen co-production at the macro-level, the absence of supportive legislation does not mean that citizen co-production is no longer possible. The lesson from this proposition is that there is an asymmetrical relationship here, whereby the absence of barriers does not necessarily promote co-production—for example, getting rid of highly bureaucratic regulations which would make citizen co-production difficult may have little effect in practice on the level or effectiveness of co-production, if there are no positive drivers in place.

5.2.2 A Conceptual Framework of Barriers to Citizen Co-production

Three general papers have summarised the research to date on barriers to co-production. OECD (2011, 173) and NESTA (2011) suggest that a lack of funding and commissioning has been a key barrier to implementing co-production in public services in the UK, together with difficulties in generating evidence of value for citizens, professionals, funders and auditors. NESTA (2011) further suggests that there is a need to develop the professional skills to mainstream co-production. Bovaird and Loeffler (2012a) added risk aversion of politicians and many public officers, as well as political and professional reluctance to lose status and ‘control’, as additional co-production barriers.

However, these studies found little academic research which specifically focused on barriers to co-production. We have therefore cast our net much wider to cover the literature on barriers and obstacles to community development, social innovation and organisational change and also to
include the ‘grey’ literature from think tanks and public sector organisations, as well as academic studies. Based on this wider literature, Fig. 5.1 provides an integrated conceptual framework of barriers to user and community co-production.

Importantly, this conceptual framework distinguishes between barriers to user co-production and barriers to community co-production—although both types of co-production face barriers arising from similar factors (demographic factors, willingness to co-produce at present and in the future, and ability to co-produce), empirical evidence indicates that the way these factors operate is likely to vary quite significantly between service users and communities.

The framework distinguishes between barriers from user and community characteristics, contextual barriers, and internal organisational barriers relating to the characteristics public service organisations.

We will now discuss these in turn, starting with barriers to user co-production.

5.2.3 Barriers to User Co-production

The demographic factors in Fig. 5.1 have been statistically tested in the European five country citizen co-production survey (Loeffler et al. 2008) and the UK five local authority citizen co-production surveys (Bovaird et al. 2016), which revealed that rather different factors affect user and community co-production. A regression analysis of the European citizen co-production survey showed that age is strongly positively correlated with individual co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12). However, the UK survey of five local authorities (Bovaird et al. 2016) suggested that co-production activity is non-linear with respect to age, in that it increases up to a certain age but then drops markedly—not surprising, in the light of the mobility restrictions and other disadvantages which often affect older people. Furthermore, the European study revealed that individual co-production is more common amongst women than men, although this correlation is quite weak (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12).

These results differ in a number of respects from those highlighted in the literature on public participation. This literature concludes that “well-educated middle-class adults are most likely to have the time, skills, and experience needed for citizen participation” and that lower income adults, in contrast, are “less likely to be able to participate” (Baum 2015, 629). Clearly, the data from the EU five country citizen survey and the UK
Fig. 5.1 Conceptual model of barriers to co-production (Source Author)
local authority survey suggest that this does not apply to co-production—there is only a very weak and inconsistent correlation between level of education and the extent of individual co-production behaviour in public safety, health and wellbeing and the local environment and only a small positive correlation in the case of collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015).

A literature review by van Lenthe et al. (2009) also concludes that there is little knowledge about the differential effects of the co-production of health promotion across different socio-economic groups, even though it is sometimes assumed that some health promotion strategies may be particularly effective in higher socio-economic groups. This is important for policy, since such a bias towards higher socio-economic groups being more involved in co-production might mean that a co-production strategy could worsen socio-economic inequalities. (Of course, it would always be possible to use a co-production strategy only for those socio-economic groups for which it was likely to be effective, while using other strategies for other socio-economic groups.)

Further empirical research is needed to analyse to what extent other demographic barriers operating at individual level such as ethnicity, relationship status, religion, disability or relationship status are relevant to individual or community co-production.

Following Alford (2009) we identify the willingness and ability of citizens to co-produce as key drivers of co-production, so Fig. 5.1. puts the focus on the factors which may reduce such willingness and ability to co-produce. Obviously, if people have a low perception of their own capabilities this is likely to reduce their willingness and ability to co-produce. Furthermore, negative past or current co-production experiences are likely to reduce the willingness of service users or communities now and in the future to co-produce. In order to unpack this relationship between past and present co-production we need a dynamic model of co-production—a conceptual framework for this is developed in Bianchi et al. (2017).

The factor of political self-efficacy has emerged as a key driver of individual as well as collective co-production in several quantitative co-production studies (Loeffler et al. 2008; Parrado et al. 2013; Bovaird et al. 2015; Löffler et al. 2015; Bovaird et al. 2016)—specifically, this means that individual or community co-production is more likely on the part of those users or communities who believe that citizens can make a difference. This also implies that, if people have a low sense of political
self-efficacy, this is likely to be a barrier to co-production and front-line staff need to find ways to combat this, e.g. by giving people positive feedback about their efforts.

This strong association of co-production with political self-efficacy does not, of course, tell us which way the causation runs—are people with a strong sense of political self-efficacy most likely to co-produce? If this is the case, then policy needs to focus on finding such people to offer them the chance to co-produce more—and on raising political self-efficacy in other people. If, on the other hand, it is the experience of co-production which leads to a greater feeling of political self-efficacy, then policy needs to focus on the strong association between self-efficacy and other wellbeing outcomes, especially psychological outcomes (Bandura 1997; Flammer 2015; Loton and Waters 2017), so that co-production is recognised as a key way of achieving these other outcomes, through its effect on self-efficacy. If both of these interpretations are justified—in other words, that co-production activities and political self-efficacy mutually reinforce each other—this raises the attractive possibility of a potential virtuous circle in policy terms. It suggests that a positive past experience of having made a difference as a citizen co-producer will increase political self-efficacy, which in turn will increase the willingness of service users or communities to co-produce in the present or in the future ... and so on.

From the five country EU study, two specific aspects of public services emerge as closely associated with higher levels of co-production, statistically significant at the 5% level:

- **Satisfaction with government provision of information**, which was positively associated with the level of individual co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12).
- **Good service performance**, in the sense of a safe neighbourhood, a clean environment, and good health, which had a negative effect on co-production, suggesting that co-production may be prompted in part by awareness of a shortfall in public performance (Parrado et al. 2013). These results were also confirmed in the five local authority study in England and Wales (Bovaird et al. 2016). Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that good performance of public service providers may be an obstacle to co-production, as good public service performance may, at the same time, have the positive effect of enhancing citizens’ feeling of self-efficacy, thereby indirectly increasing co-production. This possibility has been tested
by further regressions which show that the association of higher self-efficacy with better performance in each of the three policy areas is always positive (or close to zero) and this relationship is statistically significant in ten out of fifteen contexts (Parrado et al. 2013). However, this set of interrelationships between service performance, self-efficacy and level of co-production requires further research.

Another barrier to user co-production is likely to be low levels of trust on the part of users in working with staff—and vice versa. An empirical study of service users of a local jobcentre in the Netherlands by Fledderus and Honigh (2016, 84) established that trust in the local authority was an important precondition for unemployed people to participate in a work programme.

The ability of service users to co-produce is likely to depend, at least partly, on past experience of co-production as well as the opportunities for co-production provided by public service providers. When these opportunities are scarce, even service users who are willing to co-produce may be not able to do so. This may be behind the finding from a national citizen co-production survey in Germany that only 7% of citizens had collaborated with their local authority to improve the wellbeing of young people, and only 12% had collaborated to improve the quality of life of older people, but a huge 78% indicated that they were willing to spend at least several hours per year to support young people outside their family, and 70% reported this in the case of older people (Löffler et al. 2015, 34, 39–40). This barrier is, of course, one which is directly within the power of public service organisations to remove.

5.2.4 Barriers to Community Co-production

When analysing barriers to collective co-production, the key demographic variables identified in the five country study that are statistically significant predictors were age and education. Regression analyses showed that age is negatively correlated (although not strongly) with collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12 and 15). This is the opposite of the finding for user co-production and suggests that older people (at least up to a certain age) are less keen on the social side of co-production. Bovaird et al. (2015, 15) suggest that “the increased effort involved in collective co-production may be particularly daunting for older people, while the group nature of collective co-production may attract younger people who
are interested in making more social contacts”. However, this finding is challenging for public policy, as many public services see co-production as one way of reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation amongst the most vulnerable people they are supporting.

Those active in the workforce are also less likely to be involved in collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12), which is not surprising, given that collective co-production often requires citizen co-producers to provide their contributions at specific times which are mutually agreeable, which may be less convenient for those who are still active in the workforce.

Finally, among socio-demographic factors, more educated citizens also show a lower propensity to engage in collective co-production. This may again be partly because the more educated are likely to be in the workforce and therefore have less time but it is rather surprising, given that such people might be expected to be more comfortable taking part in activities with people not known to them. A further possible explanation could be that the more educated simply live in neighbourhoods with better public service quality, so they feel less need to make up shortfalls in public services. Clearly, further research is needed here.

The willingness of communities to co-produce will be strongly influenced by their perception of their capabilities. While self-efficacy is also correlated with individual co-production, it is even more strongly correlated with collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12 and 13). Further research is required to identify the causes of this difference but it seems highly likely that the explanation lies in the barriers to collective co-production. As these are usually likely to be perceived as higher than in individual coproduction, it takes more motivation to attempt to overcome them and citizens with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to persist in this (Bovaird et al. 2015, 18).

Another statistically significant driver having some (admittedly not very strong) effect on the willingness of communities to co-produce in the five-country EU study was citizen satisfaction with government consultation (Bovaird et al. 2015, 13). This suggests that public consultations which are badly done, e.g. by not giving feedback to citizens, may become a barrier to community co-production.

Last but not least, we need to take account of some research evidence on other barriers to community co-production which were not covered in the EU five country study or the UK five local authority study. These include barriers arising from community relationships, including lack of
social connectedness, low active membership in community associations, lack of trust within civil society and low levels of trust on the part of communities in working with staff.

Our German co-production citizen survey showed that ‘having contact with older people outside the family’ was a statistically significant factor promoting co-production to improve the quality of life of older people (Löffler et al. 2015, 49). The same finding applies to young people (Löffler et al. 2015, 41). This suggests that people who do not have contacts with older or young people outside their family may either be less interested or perhaps less able to support older or young people who need help.

It might be thought that such community relationships, which are clearly valuable in themselves, as well as being conducive to co-production, might be strengthened by being an active member in a community organisation. However, in the German co-production citizen survey this correlation was not statistically significant. In fact, the survey showed a low level of citizen engagement in community associations or groups to help older people (15%) or young people (24%) (Löffler et al. 2015, 32). The five country EU study also showed that active engagement in groups taking care of health, public safety and environmental issues was low in all five countries (Loeffler et al. 2008, 40). Of course, it may be that there is a non-linear effect here and that a step-change bringing much higher levels of membership in such associations would indeed make collective co-production easier for many people. If this is the case, then the increasing use of digital technologies may help, since it is likely to lower the threshold to participating in online peer support groups, as discussed in Chapter 3. However, further research on this is needed before assuming that membership in community associations is relevant to community co-production.

Trust is often suggested as a sine qua non for citizen co-production, not just a driver. Lack of trust can therefore be expected to be a significant barrier to both user and community co-production. But what do we mean by ‘trust’ and who needs to trust whom in order for co-production to be encouraged? The co-production literature distinguishes between particularised trust, on the one hand, which is related to a particular person, organisation or institution and, on the other hand, generalised trust, which is trust in people in general (Fledderus and Honigh 2016, 77). We suggest that low levels of generalised trust may indeed be a barrier to community co-production but we would expect it to be rather less
of a barrier in relation to user co-production, where the individual is not interacting with other citizens (although, of course, interacting often with staff from public services).

Looking at the issue of trust from the perspective of service providers, the literature provides little evidence on levels of trust by professionals in citizen co-producers—whether they co-produce as individuals or in groups. Since this is also likely to be a barrier to user and community co-production—trust clearly needs to be mutual—research on this aspect of trust is urgently needed.

Finally, trust can be dangerous if those we trust are not trustworthy—this has always been seen as a reason why citizens should be cautious in their attitude to government, since some public sector policies and actions may not be as beneficial as they seem. Again, there is little evidence on whether the trust of co-producers, whether citizens or service providers, in their fellow co-producers is justified.

### 5.2.5 Organisational Barriers to User and Community Co-production

This brings us to potential organisational barriers to user and community co-production. Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the organisational barriers suggested in the literature but there is very little evidence on which barriers are considered as important by different stakeholders involved in co-production. There is even less evidence on the extent to which specific organisational barriers get in the way of effective co-production.

A key issue in moving to a co-production approach is usually the level of resources required. It is often thought that a lack of funding has been a key barrier to co-production in public services (OECD 2011 and NESTA 2011). However, an extensive co-production study involving focus groups with professionals revealed that most co-production initiatives identified in Germany were relatively small scale (Löffler et al. 2015), so the extra direct costs associated with citizen co-production were relatively small. Typically, such costs involve direct costs for marketing co-production opportunities (e.g. printing flyers or creating new websites or apps)—this is considered further in Sect. 6.6.

Nevertheless, it is clear that most co-production initiatives do require extra staff time. This applies in particular to additive forms of co-production but even substitutive forms of co-production typically require
extra staff time for attracting and training volunteers or service users—again, this is considered further in Chapter 6. Since this experience in Germany is also likely to be common in other countries, shortage of staff time may be a much more important barrier to co-production than shortage of finance.

Some important organisational barriers arising from human resource management (HRM) issues are suggested in the literature, including the lack of specific co-production and communication staff skills (Tuurnas 2020), the lack of incentives for staff to co-produce with citizens, reluctance of staff to change, and (as mentioned in the previous section) low levels of trust by staff in the capabilities of users and/or communities (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). In particular, in personal services “the tendency for caring human service professionals and officials to define the people they are trying to help exclusively in terms of their problems without recognizing or enlisting their vast talents and capacities” (Cahn 2012) is likely to be a barrier to co-production. It is frustrating that there has so far been little focus in the literature on the extent to which HRM regulations and practices support appropriate skilling of staff and incentives for co-production. For example, to what extent do competency frameworks ensure that the right staff are recruited for citizen co-production and that staff behaving as co-producers are rewarded?

Another organisational barrier which is typically identified by professionals is poor communication within the organisation, and also with service users and communities (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). This may be due to the use of inappropriate technical jargon or the unwillingness of professionals to provide citizens with timely or relevant information.

Professionals also identify barriers to co-production arising from the perceived risks associated with giving citizens a co-production role and organisational cultures which are unsympathetic to enabling citizen co-production (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). A particular aspect of culture which may form a major barrier to co-production is the performance management system and how it is applied in practice. Where this focuses on a tight specification of outputs (as in ‘time and task’ contracts), rather than on achieving outcomes, this may make it difficult to achieve a creative and personal approach to encouraging and making the best use of citizen inputs. Performance management systems may be partly driven by national targets, so they may not only be an organisational but also a contextual barrier to citizen co-production.
More generally, professionals often suggest that regulations are too bureaucratic and that commissioning practices (particularly the approach to contract management) do not encourage citizen co-production (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). Again, these potential barriers may be partly contextual, based on governmental or auditing impositions. However, the main problem may often be how national systems are interpreted locally.

Ghate et al. (2013) have suggested that the lack of effective leadership, change management and learning—both at organisational and system level—have been barriers to collaboration, although it is striking that these factors have not been identified by professionals working in public services (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). A lack of community leadership has been pointed out by Bussu and Galanti (2018) as a barrier to community co-production.

The distribution of benefits resulting from citizen co-production between organisations may become a potential barrier if appropriate benefits do not accrue to the organisation which has borne the major costs of developing, improving or scaling co-production. For example, if a local authority invests budget and staff time in gritting footpaths after a snowfall, reducing injuries from pedestrian falls on slippery pavements, many of the benefits may go to the NHS rather than the local authority investing the resources.

Moreover, political short-termism has been suggested as an important organisational barrier to citizen co-production (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012b). In particular, in public service organisations where there is political pressure to achieve short-term savings, there may be insufficient time to achieve these savings through citizen co-production. However, even in other contexts which are not so much characterised by austerity, short electoral cycles focus the minds of politicians on quick fixes rather than social innovations which respond to the needs of future generations (Boston 2017).

### 5.2.6 Contextual Barriers to Co-production

Finally, Fig. 5.1 suggests a number of contextual barriers to citizen co-production, which are discussed in the literature. It is often suggested that citizen co-production is easier to implement in small rural communities than in metropolitan contexts, on the assumption that people are better connected to each other in rural areas. However, in our study of five EU
countries, living in an urban area was identified as a statistically significant factor in the case of individual co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12), although it was only a slightly positive factor and was not statistically significant in the case of collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2015, 12). Nevertheless, this throws doubt on the widely held assumption that communities are more likely to co-produce in rural as compared to urban locations.

Another contextual barrier which is suggested in the literature is the lack of scientific evidence of the results of co-production (OECD 2011). While the evidence has, of course, slowly been mounting and is now substantial (Loeffler and Bovaird 2016), it is still the case that there are many gaps in our knowledge about where, when, how and for whom co-production works in different contexts. This forms an obstacle to any government making a firm and clear commitment to a co-production strategy. However, there are good grounds for hoping that this obstacle will reduce over time. In Chapter 7 we look at the research priorities which will help to ensure this happens.

Finally, a comparative country study by Voorberg et al. (2017) has suggested that some state and governance traditions such as the Rechtsstaat orientation and the hierarchical mode of governance in Germany has hampered ‘co-creation’, defined by Voorberg et al. (2017, 1347) as the involvement of citizens in the initiation and/or design of public services, whereas the rather different state and governance tradition in a country such as Estonia stimulated ‘co-creation’. More recently, Loeffler and Timm-Arnold (2020) have explored how different modes of governance (hierarchical, market and network) can all be consistent with some approaches to co-production but concluded that most elements of co-production are, indeed, more likely and easier to implement in the network form of governance.

It is likely that many barriers to co-production not only differ between public service organisations but also between public services. For example, McMullin and Needham (2018, 151) suggest that “healthcare is a service sector in which there is particular impetus for co-productive approaches, …, but it is also a setting in which the barriers to co-production may be particularly prohibitive”. This shows the need for more research on differences between service sectors.
5.3 Risks and Uncertainties Arising from Co-production

User and community co-production as a form of social innovation and organisational change management involves risks. As Flemig and Osborne (2017, 179) point out “innovation and risk taking are inextricably linked”. Therefore, risk management is a key issue for the effective implementation of co-production. However, this is not always given proper consideration. Even though the UK-based social innovation think tank National Endowment for Sciences, Technology and the Arts (NESTA 2008, 2) acknowledges that risk is important in social innovation, its recommendations for mainstreaming co-production do not even mention this issue (Boyle et al. 2010). It is striking that little of the academic literature on co-production has focussed on the issue of risks involved with co-production and how to address them.

The next section critically reviews the current state of knowledge around risks of co-production and identifies types of risks that need to be taken into account by key stakeholders in co-production. In subsequent sections, we suggest a new model of risk enablement and risk management to develop and scale user and community co-production in a public sector context.

5.3.1 Defining Risk Arising from User and Community Co-production

How can risks be defined in a context of user and community co-production? Knight (1921) famously suggested that risk is how we measure today the adverse impact or losses we think may happen in the future. This means that risk has two elements: one is the magnitude of the negative effect of an event, the other is the likelihood that an event with adversarial effects is going to take place in the future. Economists traditionally limited the concept of ‘risk’ to elements of uncertainty to which probability estimates can be attached. Similarly, Flemig and Osborne (2017, 183) have recently suggested that risk management approaches should differentiate between risks which are known a priori (and can be attributed a probability estimate) and uncertainty, that is unquantifiable risk that can only be recognised a posteriori. However, risk assessment and management specialists in the ‘risk industry’ nowadays normally use
‘risk’ to cover all the factors which contribute to uncertainty, whether or not they can be captured by probability estimates.

Risks can be defined objectively but are also socially constructed (Renn 2008). The latter have often been dismissed as ‘myths’ and proponents of co-production have sometimes proposed ‘myth busters’ to dispel perceived risks as not based on evidence. However, if we accept the concept of the bounded rationality of human beings, we must acknowledge that the perception of risk may be different from stakeholder to stakeholder and from context to context. A good example is given by focus groups of local residents in a small town with an objectively low crime rate in Switzerland, who perceived a significant higher risk of being the victim of crime than focus group participants in Barcelona where some participants had already been the victim of pickpockets (Parrado et al. 2005).

Brown and Osborne (2013) suggest that risk can be conceptualised at three different levels: consequential risk at the level of the individual, organisational risk at the level of the organisation and its staff, and behavioural risk at the level of the community. In practice, consequential risks can be experienced where either individuals or communities do not gain the outcomes they expect. Moreover, it is important to differentiate risks to organisational outcomes from risks to organisational processes.

The framework presented in Table 5.1 therefore distinguishes risks to personal outcomes, community outcomes, organisational outcomes, organisational processes, non-compliance with legal and regulatory constraints and non-compliance with public governance principles. It also recognises that an event with a negative impact for one stakeholder may often be a benefit for another stakeholder—a ‘positive risk’ (Seale et al. 2013). It therefore distinguishes how risks are viewed by different stakeholders—this multi-stakeholder approach has been neglected in much public sector analysis of risks.

A major problem with risk management is that decision makers around public policy tend to give negative risks more weight than positive risks of the same size (Peters and Slovic 2000). This immediately stacks the cards against co-production, particularly where it is not already being practiced, since its introduction or wider usage involves a degree of uncertainty (as, indeed, applies to any innovation). Moreover, public sector decision-makers may put a higher weight on potential reputational damage to their organisation from things going wrong, even if they recognise that there could potentially be major benefits for local communities or service
### Table 5.1 Risks arising from user and community co-production

| Stakeholder at risk/Types of risks | Politicians | Commissioners | Service providers | Service users | Wider local communities |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Risks to personal outcomes        | Reputation loss and loss of support from voters who don’t want co-production or don’t like its results | Reputation loss or loss of support from other stakeholders who don’t want co-production or don’t like its results | Managers’ loss of support from stakeholders who don’t think co-production is working well Potential damage to managers’ career where co-production is not working well Job loss or hours reduction for front-line staff Less job autonomy for frontline workers where co-production gives more power to service users and communities – and disciplinary action if anything goes wrong | Service user dissatisfaction with results of co-production Service users must put in more effort in order to benefit from co-produced service Unequal contribution (some service users contribute more than in proportion to benefits received) | Dissatisfaction of community members with results of co-production Community must put in more effort in order to benefit from co-produced service Unequal contribution (some community members contribute more than in proportion to benefits received) |

(continued)
Table 5.1 (continued)

| Stakeholder at risk/Types of risks | Politicians | Commissioners | Service providers | Service users | Wider local communities |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Risks to community outcomes       | Failure to achieve effective co-production outcomes in politician's own community | Benefits of co-production which is funded may go to unintended communities or to other organisations which have not made an appropriate contribution | NA | NA | Lack of opportunity for a community to make a contribution (social exclusion) Community dissatisfaction with results of co-production |
| Risks to organisational outcomes  | Loss of power from public sector organisations to citizens | Reputation loss, where co-production does not work well Costs of court cases where citizens reject decommissioning of traditional services Dissatisfaction of users and communities with implementation of co-production | Reputation loss, where co-production does not work well or no longer receives funding inspite of positive outcomes Reduced demand for services of the provider, when service users or communities play a greater role Loss of ‘bottom-line’ results if co-production reduces profits (private sector) or turnover (non-profit sector) Loss of contract because of inability to co-produce effectively | NA | NA |
| Stakeholder at risk/Types of risks | Politicians | Commissioners | Service providers | Service users | Wider local communities |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Loss of influence on public sector decisions about public services | Loss of face from court cases arising | Protests from citizens who don’t want co-production or don’t like its results | Need to retrain staff and educate service users and communities on how they can co-produce services | NA | NA |
| Failure to mobilise effective co-production activities in politician’s own community | | Lack of appropriate procedures to design, implement and monitor co-production approach | | | |
| | | Lack of motivation of staff, service users or communities to make effective contribution | | | |
| Risks of non-compliance with legal or regulatory constraints | | Reputation loss, policy reversal and possible damages from court cases arising | Reputaion loss and possible damages from court cases arising | Lower outcomes may be experienced by individuals if statutory minima are not achieved by co-produced services | Lower outcomes may be experienced by communities if statutory minima are not achieved by co-produced services |

(continued)
Table 5.1 (continued)

| Stakeholder at risk/Types of risks | Politicians | Commissioners | Service providers | Service users | Wider local communities |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Risks of non-compliance with governance principles | Reputation loss and loss of support from voters who think co-production has not been implemented well | Loss of support from other stakeholders who think co-production has not been implemented well | Managers’ loss of support from stakeholders who think co-production has not been implemented well | Service user dissatisfaction with how co-production has been implemented Co-production activities may be imposed, non-transparent, unfair or discriminatory on some or all service users Unequal contribution (some service users contribute more than in proportion to benefits received) Exploitation | Community dissatisfaction with how co-production has been implemented Co-production may be imposed, non-transparent, unfair, discriminatory, non-accountable or unsustainable in its implementation Unequal contribution of volunteers (some contribute more than in proportion to benefits received) Exploitation Co-production activities may harm the environment |

*Source* Author
users. It is essential to explore WHOSE risks are at stake, as traditional risk assessments are typically carried out from the point of view of the commissioner or service provider, and therefore often neglect the risks (and potential benefits) perceived by service users or local communities. This tendency is exacerbated by the fact that commissioners often have few opportunities to spend much time outside their office, and the same may be true of top managers in provider organisations, so that contact with user groups or user representatives may be very limited.

Co-assessments are one method for providing a more holistic risk assessment, as they encourage more inclusive consideration of eventualities. In particular, co-assessments may help to identify to what extent citizens are willing to trade off the possibility of higher levels of personal and public outcomes against increased personal and public risks. For example, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine involves patient advocates in the assessment of grants for medical research on stem cell therapies. Expert scientific reviewers often focus on the high risk of failure. However, patient advocates are more willing to champion ‘outlier’ science and to accept high risk, if it is balanced by the potential for better outcomes. As the patient advocate Jeff Sheehy (2018) reflects, “I pay special attention to grant applications that receive highly varied scores from reviewers. Our influence has sometimes meant that a risky grant has been funded over a safer one with higher median scores”. Furthermore Sheehy (2018) suggests, “patient advocates can also be more sceptical of strategies that consider human physiology but neglect behaviour”.

In Table 5.1 we therefore exemplify key risks frequently identified in the literature as associated with co-production, classified by type of risk.

In line with the definition of Knight (1921) most risks identified with co-production in the academic literature are the opposites of the benefits of co-production. In particular, a key risk is that there is a likelihood that a co-production initiative may not improve public value to the degree hoped for, or at least does not provide evidence of improved public value. In the worst case, it may even reduce public value. We will discuss negative impacts of co-production in more detail in Sect. 5.5. It would be possible, of course, to complement the risks outlined in Table 5.1 with the set of potential benefits (ideally with their estimated likelihoods) but that would make the Table rather unwieldy.

Looking at risks to personal outcomes, elected politicians are likely to give considerable weight to their potential loss of reputation if co-production goes wrong, leading to a potential loss of support from
their electors. Commissioners championing co-production are also likely to fear reputational damage if their ‘project’ does not deliver expected results or if they lose support from other stakeholders who don’t want co-production or don’t like its results, with potential damage to their personal ‘careers’.

Amongst providers, managers face the risk of lower personal outcomes through loss of support from stakeholders who don’t think co-production is working well, with potential damage to their careers. Front-line staff are likely to fear having less job autonomy where co-production gives more power to service users and communities, while they may even face job loss or reduction in their hours of paid work, where co-production works well and citizens can take over some of the functions which they perform. Front-line staff may also be particularly reluctant to take the risks which they see attached to co-production approaches, fearing they may face disciplinary action or even job loss, if anything goes wrong, unless their line manager or head of service has agreed formally to such actions within a risk management framework.

The risks to personal outcomes for service users and communities are, on the one side, that the expected outcomes may not be achieved, while, on the other hand, they may also have to put more effort into getting the services. Furthermore, some service users and community members may believe that they make unequal contributions, in proportion to the benefits they receive (which may make them feel exploited).

The main risks to community outcomes are naturally experienced by community members. For some, social exclusion may mean a lack of opportunity to make a contribution. However, even those members of the community who have this opportunity may be dissatisfied with the results of co-production, at least in comparison with the efforts they put in—for example, if ‘free riders’ have reduced the overall effectiveness of the community initiative (and, even more infuriatingly, may have benefited from it in spite of not having contributed).

Risks to outcomes for public service organisations, whether commissioners or providers, involve possible loss of reputation if co-production is ineffective, or even worse, if it is dysfunctional. Paradoxically, even successful and mainstreamed co-production initiatives may result in some dissatisfied service users or community members, if traditional services are decommissioned, and this may result in unforeseen costs to commissioners, e.g. from complaints or even court cases. Public service providers face the risk that successful co-production initiatives may reduce the
demand for their services. Furthermore, service providers, in particular small innovative organisations, may experience worse ‘bottom-line’ results if co-production means that they lose some of the most profitable aspects of their work—or may face the loss of a contract if they fail to co-produce effectively.

Public service organisations face risks if their co-production processes fail through lack of motivation of staff, service users or communities to make effective contributions and also through protests from citizens who don’t want co-production or don’t like its results. Providers also may need to retrain staff and educate service users and communities on what co-production entails.

The risks to public service organisations of non-compliance with legal or regulatory requirements mainly involve reputation loss and possible damages from court cases arising—and for commissioners there is the added risk of policy reversal. For service users and communities, there is the risk of lower outcomes if statutory minima are not achieved by co-produced services.

Finally, the risks to public service organisations of non-compliance with public governance principles are mainly the loss of support from other stakeholders who think co-production has not been implemented well. For service users and communities, there is the risk of dissatisfaction with how co-production has been implemented—in particular, it may be imposed, non-transparent, unfair, discriminatory, non-accountable or unsustainable in its results and some people may feel exploited—e.g. if they believe that the public sector has ‘dumped’ the responsibility on them (so what has is occurring is essentially self-organisation, not co-production) or they may simply feel they are being asked to make an unfair contribution.

5.3.2 Risk Management and Enablement Strategies for More Effective User and Community Co-production

In the previous section, we have discussed how co-production is perceived to be risky. However, this is not simply a matter of perception—co-production is indeed characterised by uncertainty, especially where it deals with complex issues. The Cynefin model of Snowden and Boone (2007) is useful for identifying risks and uncertainty, depending on the knowledge domain in question.
Where co-production aims at tackling problems within the *simple knowledge domain*, as often in transactional services, we are dealing with ‘known’ cause-and-effect relationships and can expect to apply best practice. This means that there are few risks and little uncertainty. However, when we operate within the *complicated knowledge domain*, there are ‘known unknowns’ which require further research, so that we are only able to apply good practice. In such contexts, it is possible to estimate the likelihood of adverse future events but we recognise that these estimates only apply within quite a wide margin of error.

Things are very different in the *complex knowledge domain*, which is characterised by ‘unknown unknowns’, so that the relationship between cause and effect can only be perceived in retrospect. This means that we cannot predict likely positive or negative co-production outcomes of the interventions by professionals or citizens—the best we can do is to experiment and sense what works and what doesn’t. In this scenario, traditional risk management tools are not applicable and stakeholders involved in co-production need to deal with major uncertainty. Co-production (and wider collaboration with diverse stakeholders) is a ‘must-have’ in the complex knowledge domain, as no single person or organisation knows the answer to complex problems. However, many organisations have not yet recognised the need for innovation in the complex knowledge domain, along with the experimentation which innovation involves. Many scholars blame the resistance to innovation in the public sector on the bureaucratic nature of public sector organisations (Yeboah-Assiamah et al. 2016, 388). This is especially likely in public service contexts characterised by hierarchical governance, rather than network forms of governance, although even here innovation, including co-production can sometimes occur (Loeffler and Timm-Arnold 2020). It has to be recognised that an additional factor promoting resistance to innovation may be the difficulties involved in multi-stakeholder decision-making. However, whatever the reason, the reluctance to innovate through experimentation in the public sector seriously undermines its ability to achieve improved outcomes when working in the complex knowledge domain.

Finally, in *chaotic knowledge domains*, there is no discernible relationship between cause and effect at systems level, so nothing can be predicted in relation to policy outcomes—the best we can do is to explore novel practice. Given the uncertainty, no risk management is possible but new co-production initiatives may emerge during or after the crisis. An example is the arrival of a large number of refugees in Europe in 2015
who were met by a varying (but often unexpectedly high) level of community support. However, many local authorities in Germany were initially unable to take up or even coordinate the support offered by volunteers, as they devoted their resources to crisis management. Out of this situation new co-production initiatives emerged, such as the Refugee Councils in the City of Kehl, consisting of representatives elected by refugees at neighbourhood level to act as a bridge for the different language communities to the local people of Kehl and to co-deliver projects involving other refugees with seed-funding from the local council (Gustafson and Delmas 2017).

As Table 5.2 shows, different knowledge domains require different risk management strategies to deal with risk and uncertainty.

Bovaird and Quirk (2017, 262) distinguish between the following strategies to manage risk and uncertainty:

- **portfolio management**—this involves choosing a portfolio of activities with lower risk attached, e.g. increasing the level of existing successful co-production initiatives with a similar target group;
- **risk reduction in the environment**—reducing the likelihood that key risks occur or influencing their nature to make particularly negative consequences less damaging, e.g. by ensuring that all citizens taking part in a Streetwatch patrol wear high-visibility vests, so that potential miscreants see them quickly and leave the area;
- **risk enablement** to encourage decision makers in the service system to choose activities with appropriate levels of risk, rather than aiming at risk minimisation, e.g. by engaging people with learning disabilities and their care-givers in the co-design of adventure holidays, sometimes with ‘travel buddies’ included (Go Provence Supported 2019);
- **building resilience into the service system**, so that service provider staff, service users and local communities can recover quickly and learn from the adverse effects of risk and uncertainty, e.g. by providing all peer group mentors with the opportunity to have psychological back-up if something goes wrong with a service user they are supporting.

Working in the simple knowledge domain, little actual risk management is necessary and it suffices to stick to ‘best practice’ approaches, as we
Table 5.2 Risk management strategies for different knowledge domains

| Knowledge domain | Information available | Risks | Uncertainty | Risk management |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------|-----------------|
| Simple           | ‘Known knowns’        | Risks can be identified a priori but there is also a risk that complicated or complex contexts are mistaken for simple knowledge domain | Little uncertainty | • Sticking to available ‘best practice’ |
| Complicated      | ‘Known unknowns’      | Risks can be identified a priori | Some uncertainty | • Portfolio management     |
| Complex          | ‘Unknown unknowns’ plus some ‘Known unknowns’ | Most risks cannot be identified a priori, although some are known in advance | High uncertainty | • Risk enablement |
| Chaotic          | ‘Unknown unknowns’    | Risks cannot be identified a priori | Complete uncertainty | • Resilience in the service system |

Source: Adapted from Bovaird and Quirk (2017)

are dealing with ‘known knowns’. However, the biggest risk is that public service organisations mistake a ‘complicated’ or ‘complex issue’ as a simple problem and rush to fix the problem with traditional public sector interventions. This can happen in particular in situations where insufficient time is devoted to framing a problem through discussion with stakeholders—and it is even more likely where public service organisations sign off action plans in spite of divergent stakeholder views on the nature of the problem at stake.
In the case of complicated issues, portfolio management and risk reduction strategies are appropriate but difficult to apply in practice, as the set of ‘knowns’ that can be modelled is quite limited. Risk assessment typically takes place during the planning phase but should be revisited in later stages of the commissioning cycle as more ‘unknowns’ become ‘known’—and, of course, the experience of the service users, their family and network becomes more relevant as the delivery phase extends, making co-production potentially more powerful.

In complex knowledge domains, the risk management strategies based on advance risk assessment are no longer appropriate. What is needed are ‘soft’ risk management approaches, which build resilience into the service system as well as risk enablement. Bovaird and Quirk (2017, 265) suggest the need to build a whole system ‘resilience chain’ with strong links between user resilience, community resilience and provider resilience, rather than just focusing on the resilience of service providers. In complex adaptive systems it is no longer possible to undertake formal risk assessment in the planning stage—instead, it must be part of the experimentation phase, as stakeholders can only sense the positive or negative outcomes of their co-production activities after they have undertaken the activity. In order to capture the learning about outcomes and risks arising from co-production, a joint risk assessment during the review phase of the commissioning cycle is also likely to be beneficial.

In chaotic knowledge domains, traditional risk management strategies do not make any sense but a strong resilience chain may help the affected stakeholders to cope with turbulence. Risk assessment is only possible once the crisis is over and, based on the learning, stakeholders may have the opportunity, at least partly, to move into another knowledge domain.

In practice, different stakeholders involved in co-production are likely to be working in different knowledge domains. For professional service providers and commissioners, many traditional public services may operate at least partly in the simple knowledge domain—e.g. technical services such as local transport. However, a person with disabilities, for whom even local travel poses many obstacles, may perceive local transport as proffering a complicated knowledge domain, while for people living with dementia it may constitute a complex issue.

When the service moves to a co-production approach, however, even local transport is likely to be anchored in the complicated or complex knowledge domains for all stakeholders, because the intensity and dynamics of stakeholder inter-relationships are so much greater.
This applies even more, of course, to most personal services—there is already interest in modelling health and social services as complex adaptive systems (for example, Health Foundation 2010), so co-production of these services is even more likely to be operating in the ‘complicated’ or ‘complex’ knowledge domains.

The lesson is clear—co-production may reduce some of the risks of traditional service approaches, because it brings in the knowledge and experience of service users and their communities but it also means that the service is more likely to be operating in the complicated or complex knowledge domains. This has implications for the treatment of risk—where applications of risk assessment and management stray from the domain in which their approach could be relevant into domains where their assumptions are irrelevant, they are likely to be ineffective.

5.3.3 The Role of Co-production in Strengthening the ‘Resilience Chain’

How can we move from traditional risk reduction strategies to risk enablement, where all key stakeholders involved agree on an acceptable level of risk and a desirable level of personal and public outcomes? This requires both a risk governance framework as proposed by Renn (2008), and later adopted by Brown and Osborne (2013), but also co-production with users and communities to strengthen every link in the chain of the user-community-provider whole system resilience (Bovaird and Quirk 2017, 265).

By resilience we mean (adopting Edson 2012) adaptation that supports successful achievement of goals and objectives, as well as learning for future planning and preparation. Although this is inherently a system-wide concept, the current literature on resilience has focussed particularly on the resilience of the market, and especially of individual service providers, and less on the resilience of its other agents in the service system. The concept ‘resilience chain’ as defined by Bovaird and Quirk (2017, 264) highlights the resilience of all the agents within the system, in particular citizens (both individually as service users and collectively as communities) and organisations (both service providers and commissioners).

Co-production can play an important role in strengthening user and community resilience, which are important elements of the resilience chain. When the capabilities and resources of service users are able to be
harnessed, in a situation where professionals become temporarily unavailable or have to reduce the role they play, then they are much less vulnerable. For example, in the Japanese City of Saitama, the public fire service developed an action learning programme to prepare young children in nurseries to adopt appropriate forms of behaviour for evacuations in the case of earthquakes (Loeffler 2017). This innovative emergency training was based on evidence from the case of Kamaishi City, where 99.3% of the population survived a big earthquake in East Japan and where emergency training had played a big role. The fire service had decided to start the emergency training in early childhood, as it considered that it would be more difficult to change the behaviour of adults. The fire service officers involved co-designed a fun action learning programme with children of one local nursery to help them learn five key rules of behaviour. They compared the results before and after the action learning, in order to test whether the exercise had worked. This allowed them to prototype a new training programme for children, which could be rolled out across other nurseries in Saitama City.

Furthermore, the social support network of users may be able to take on some of the functions of professionals, provided their capacity has been strengthened through previous training or other forms of professional support. Examples are the KeyRing Living Support Networks for vulnerable adults in the UK, which comprise ten people living within walking distance of each other. Nine of these people are vulnerable adults and the tenth is a Community Living Volunteer who lives rent-free in the network area and has been trained by the charity KeyRing to provide support to other network members (Parker et al. 2019).

These examples demonstrate individual (service user) resilience. However, the same applies to community co-production. Identifying and mobilising community assets through community co-production enables communities to cope when public services fail to deliver the expected outcomes or need to reduce their inputs. This does not mean that public services disappear (after all, this would no longer qualify as ‘co-production’). However, when local community assets are weak, some ‘up-front’ investment of the public sector may be needed to develop community assets. This is a role long played by community capacity-building or community development. According to the definition of the United Nations (1955, 6), “community development can be tentatively defined as a process designed to create conditions of economic
and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance upon the community’s initiative”. As Vanleene and Verschuere (2018, 199) point out, community development typically involves professionals and local people working together. However, we suggest that community development does not always conform to our definition of co-production, since it often consists of community self-organisation, with no significant input from public service organisations. (Indeed, some community development workers consider traditional public services to be part of the problem). A good example is the purely resident-led renewal of the neighbourhood Balsall Heath in the 1980s where members of the local communities came together to drive prostitution out of the neighbourhood and raised money to employ their own community organiser (Atkinson 2010). This led to the foundation of the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Forum in 1994, which subsequently began to work more closely with the public sector and, indeed, eventually received many grants from Birmingham City Council and other local public agencies for community co-production activities.

Other important links in the ‘resilience chain’ which need to be strengthened are service provider resilience and the resilience of commissioners (Bovaird and Quirk 2017, 265). Providers can build resilience into their services through internal mechanisms such as quality assurance and performance information systems but also by strengthening their co-production with service users and communities, which gives them alternative provision opportunities when other forms of provision fail. Commissioners need to ensure that the overall market of service providers is resilient, e.g. by setting up recovery mechanisms such as arrangements with providers of neighbouring local authorities, so that alternative service providers can be mobilised quickly if needed. Moreover, they need to make provisions for the negative consequences of future recommissioning decisions or organisational restructuring—for example, they need to assure that the knowledge gained from working with service providers remains available to the service after these changes occur. This is not easy, as many relevant staff may be shifted to other jobs or even made redundant—including, very often, some of the experienced commissioners.

Clearly, different types of user and community co-production involve different levels of risk for commissioners, service providers and citizen co-producers and their social networks. At the same time, it is important to recognise that specific types of co-production such as peer support may
also be promoted in the public sector as a risk enablement strategy—by embedding more co-production, all service commissioning and delivery approaches can move to accepting more appropriate levels of risk, as shown in Fig. 5.2.

For example, personal budgets are now common in adult social care in the UK as a form of micro-commissioning to enable service users to make their own choices of public services and service providers (through a direct payment or a self-managed budget), as discussed in Chapter 4. Such co-commissioning is often perceived as highly risky by both commissioners and service users. For Carr (2011, 123) this “implies the need for changes in the way that risk is understood, managed, discussed and negotiated with the person using the service”. One risk enablement strategy in this context may be the development of peer support networks which allow individual service users to benefit from the advice and knowledge of other personal budget holders. This type of co-production can reduce the risk related to co-commissioning at service user level by building user resilience as shown in Fig. 5.2.

Fig. 5.2  A risk enablement co-production cycle (Source Author)
The implementation of higher risk co-production initiatives needs to be followed by an assessment of future risks and uncertainty. For example, the introduction of digital marketplaces may involve new risks for service users who are not digitally literate. This requires the development of new risk enablement approaches, such as digital training courses, which may be co-delivered by other service users with more digital skills. In the terms of Fig. 5.2, this would initiate a new risk enablement co-production cycle.

More research is required on how commissioners and service providers can develop effective co-production with vulnerable groups through risk enablement strategies. In particular, third sector organisations may have a new role to play as ‘resilience builders’.

5.4 Change Management to Implement Co-production

5.4.1 A Change Management Framework

The initiation and dissemination of citizen co-production does not happen by itself but requires change management within and beyond public service organisations.

The term change management is often associated with linear change management theories such as Lewin’s (1947) three-step (‘unfreeze-change-refreeze’) model or Kotter’s (2012) eight phases of change (‘urgency – coalition – vision - buy-in -empower - short-term wins -don’t let up - make it stick’). However, in this book we adopt a wider definition of change management based on Child (2005), which considers both planned and emergent changes, which may be radical or incremental. As Jacobs et al. (2013, 773) comment, “organizational change is a notoriously complex phenomenon; it is only natural that research on organizational change addressed this complexity from numerous more or less complementary or contradictory, but equally legitimate perspectives. These perspectives stretch across disciplinary boundaries, across methodological camps, and often across contradictory visions of organizations.”

Clearly, the change management of co-production goes beyond mere organisational changes and therefore can only be understood from a more system-wide perspective, which incorporates the complexity and multiple stakeholder relationships which typically characterise co-production. In this vein, Evers and Ewert (2020) frame co-production as social innovation, namely as a process, with the dynamics and the factors that mould
and direct it, allowing new concepts and practices to diffuse, coexist with the mainstream, influence or even redefine it.

However, not all types of co-production can be considered as a social innovation in a specific context. For example, if a local authority takes action to expand the numbers of volunteers being active in the local fire brigade, this scaling effort can hardly be considered as a social innovation. However, if a job centre experiments with new types of co-production in employment services, as is the case in the Offenbach Employment Agency (Loeffler and Schulze-Böing 2020), the social innovation perspective does offer an appropriate lens for analysis.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish whether co-production takes place in a simple, complicated, complex or chaotic knowledge domain (Snowden and Boone 2007). As the analysis in Table 5.2 shows, this has implications for risk management in co-production. We also consider that the knowledge domain has implications for the appropriateness of specific theoretical perspectives. Our proposition is that in simple knowledge domains traditional linear change management theories may still be of some relevance (even though co-production goes beyond organisational change). However, the more we move into complex knowledge domains, the more will experimentation be required, which will involve iterative learning processes rather than a linear process with a clearly defined end.

Sørensen and Torfing (2011, 850, based on Hall 1993) make a useful distinction between first-order change, which is about producing and delivering more or less of the same kind of goods, services, or solutions, as compared to second-order change, which involves “changing the form, content, and repertoire of goods, services, and organisational routines” and third-order change, which is about “transforming the underlying problem understanding, policy objective and program theory”. In short, we argue here that only second- and third-order changes qualify as social innovation.

This implies that change management for co-production needs to draw on different theoretical frameworks, depending on the type of change to which we aspire and the knowledge domain in which we are operating. For first-order change, the implementation and traditional change management literature may provide useful frameworks to some extent, even though scaling co-production across neighbourhoods or stakeholder groups may require new experimentation rather than just multiplying a single prototype. However, for second and third-order changes, the
literature on the economics of innovation, planning theory, and public administration together may “provide an interdisciplinary framework for further analysis of collaborative innovation” (Sørensen and Torfing 2011, 858). What makes policy design and implementation even more difficult is that, typically, most public service organisations will be faced with achieving first, second and third order changes at the same time, both building on existing co-production initiatives but also initiating new types of co-production.

This section will provide a conceptual change management framework for citizen co-production. It draws on the Co-Production Star toolkit of Governance International, which includes a structured change management process to initiate, experiment with and implement effective citizen co-production initiatives. The framework can be used for first, second and third order change processes. In particular, the third step (‘people it’) includes iterative experimentation processes. As is highlighted by the fifth step (‘grow it’), the issue is not to sustain a bespoke co-production initiative but to develop it organically in changing contexts.

As shown in Fig. 5.3, the outer ring of the Co-production Star involves five steps: mapping existing co-production initiatives and new co-production opportunities, focussing on those with the highest impact,
peopling priority co-production initiatives with ‘people who know and care’, marketing the improved outcomes and/or savings to the sceptics, and growing the successful co-production initiatives within the public service organisation, its partners and local communities.

These five steps include three phases:

a. An initiation phase to identify windows of opportunity for new co-production initiatives, which includes Steps 1 and 2 of the Co-Production Star;

b. an experimental phase for creating ‘Co-Production Labs’ and mobilising ‘coalitions of the willing’, which is what Step 3 of the Co-Production Star is about;

c. an implementation phase to widen and deepen those co-production initiatives which promise to provide improved public value—this is the objective of Steps 4 and 5 of the Co-production Star.

While new co-production initiatives may proceed in these three phases, change management for existing co-production practices will mainly focus on the implementation phase. We will now discuss each of the five steps of this change management model in more detail (Loeffler and Hine-Hughes 2013 and Loeffler 2015):

*Step 1: ‘Map it’*

As the academic literature demonstrates, co-production is not a new phenomenon. However, public service organisations and local communities are often not aware of the extent to which co-production is already happening. In particular, at times of austerity it is important for public service providers not to ‘re-invent the wheel’ but to build on existing co-production practices. Therefore, the first step—MAP IT—is about identifying existing co-production initiatives—so-called ‘early adopters’—as well as exploring the potential for new co-production approaches to achieve improved outcomes or efficiency savings.

Most public service organisations do not have much data on how citizens contribute to their public services or priority outcomes. Therefore, it is often necessary to start a mapping process through staff and citizens exploring with each other the level and quality of co-production activities in which they are engaged. Such mapping exercises should separate the four modes of co-production: co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery and co-assessment (as outlined in Chapter 3). This
allows for a more detailed and nuanced picture of the current state of co-production and often suggests the potential for new co-production opportunities, as it reveals gaps (since one ‘Co’ may lead to another ‘Co’). For example, mapping co-production with focus groups of professionals working in public safety services at the local level in Germany revealed that most co-production initiatives focussed on co-delivery but that co-design and co-assessment were very rare and co-commissioning even more exceptional (Loeffler and Timm-Arnold 2020).

Step 2: ‘Focus it’

Given that the resources of citizens and public service organisations are limited, it is important to focus on those co-production initiatives which are likely to bring about significant outcome improvements or efficiency savings. Step 2 is about setting priorities through a structured ‘options appraisal’. In particular, it is about determining what is to be co-produced, who is supposed to benefit from it and for which purpose. This business case—developed with all the stakeholders—can help ensure both community and public resources are used effectively and resources are re-allocated from co-production approaches with a low benefit-cost ratio to co-production approaches with a higher benefit-cost ratio. This allows all relevant stakeholders to agree on what success should look like and to develop a theory of change on how the agreed outcomes are to be achieved through co-production.

This prioritisation process ensures that citizen co-production initiatives are consistent with commissioning strategies and linked to priority public outcomes of public service organisations. In some cases, it may be important to give elected politicians an active role, so that they can legitimise co-production initiatives which may be controversial. For example, in the case of a public park, different groups of citizens may wish to pursue co-production initiatives which (due to limited space in the park) may exclude each other: while some friends of the park may wish to plant out banks of spring bulbs and to seed ‘wilderness areas’, other local residents may want to meet up in the park to exercise their dogs and young families may wish to use large parts of the park for their children to romp around in. This is where local councillors come in—having discussed the options with different community groups, a political decision has to be made which balances their interests and gives weight to the local authority’s priorities. In this way, the ‘Focus’ step of the Co-production Star
ensures that both citizens and public service organisations have an input into the final decisions about the park—neither side is ‘in control’.

Of course, the agreed outcomes are likely to require adaptation during the next phase, which involves experimentation through trying out the chosen co-production initiatives. In particular, new stakeholders contributing to the experimental phase may have different personal outcomes which matter more to them. Consequently, co-production has to remain a flexible, dynamic process, which continually adjusts to its complex and changing context. This is likely to encourage stakeholders to focus on ‘quick wins’ as the obvious starting point, which can then act as a catalyst for action, by attracting people who want to make a contribution, and then allowing learning and further adaptation to take place.

**Step 3: ‘People it’**

This step involves a structured process of experimentation with the prioritised co-production initiatives, undertaken by people who are able and willing to make a contribution. At this stage, public service commissioners and providers are challenged to identify those citizen co-producers and staff who will be important in the co-production initiative and then to motivate them to make a contribution.

Some public services may already be in touch with the relevant citizens—this is particularly likely where service users have to register with public service providers (e.g. in Job Centres), although even these services may find it challenging to persuade service users to work with them as co-producers (Loeffler and Schulze-Böing 2020). However, many public services experience great difficulties getting in touch with target service users or communities, so this process needs to be carefully thought through. (Incidentally, this provides a reality check for those organisations that claim they are already doing a lot of co-production in close cooperation with citizens—this is less credible when they find it hard to get service users or community members to turn up when they are exploring new co-production initiatives!)

Some services clearly have particular challenges in contacting the right people for co-production—e.g. preventative social services, where most citizens only get in touch with social services when they are in need and those who are at risk of needing a future service are still not known to the service. Other public services, such as employment services, may be in regular touch with jobseekers but find that the threat of sanctions may decrease the motivation of jobseekers to co-produce with their job coach,
unless the co-production initiative is voluntary and clearly beneficial to them. In other public services, data protection regulations may make it difficult for public service providers to contact service users. Therefore, creativity is required in identifying new ways to engage with service users and communities. In some cases, professionals can use existing contact points, such as reception desks, customer service centres or complaints procedures to get in touch with relevant service users. Brandsen (2020) also recommends meeting vulnerable people in surroundings familiar to them, instead of inviting them to public buildings where they may not feel comfortable.

Similarly, if an ‘outside-in’ pathway to co-production is chosen, then community groups such as women who have completed a cancer therapy may find it hard to get in touch with public services, since from the point of view of service providers their treatment has finished (Halliday 2019). As Halliday’s case study shows, boundary spanners such as the chair of the Health and Social Care Partnership in Dumfries and Galloway, can play an important role in bridging the gap between communities who are motivated to co-produce and professionals who are prepared to support community initiatives, so that they are transformed into co-production.

As part of the ‘People it’ step, it is necessary to identify what service users and communities can contribute and to what extent they would like to contribute more than they do already. Public service staff must be able to identify and develop the strengths of citizens for co-production rather than just responding to citizens’ needs (Burns 2013). However, many public service organisations lack this information. In many cases, asset-mapping exercises focus on organisational assets in the third sector or physical assets in communities but not on the assets of individuals. Nevertheless, some information sources may be available. Where there is a time bank, its members can be particularly relevant. Again, the databases of organisations coordinating volunteers, such as local voluntary services councils in the UK, can provide some information as to who might contribute to new co-production initiatives. Moreover, extra information on actual or potential contributions of citizens may also be collected through community surveys at local level or through capability assessments at the individual level.

Clearly, many public service staff will not be used to such processes of ‘capability assessment’ and will need training and support. Still less will they be used to receiving offers to help in service improvement from citizens, which is a sign of self-sustaining growth of the co-production
approach. What is likely to be even more daunting for most staff is to match citizens who make such offers to demands from other citizens for such help (especially if both groups of citizens have specific ideas as to who they want to co-produce with). Such ‘matching’ skills are not common in private or third sectors and even less so in the public sector. Nevertheless, this is key and there can be real hope that digital solutions will make such a process much easier (after all, Uber and Air B’B are essentially just platforms to enable such matching).

A large part of the learning involves ‘learning by doing’ in ‘Co-Production Labs’ where co-producers design and test the new co-production initiatives in a protected space. In these experimental Labs, it will often be valuable to focus on recruiting citizens ‘who know and care’ (see Sect. 2.4.2), as they are more likely to ‘get it’ and help to make the initiative successful. However, it will also be important in the Lab to tackle the issue of how to convince more reluctant service users and community members and motivate them also to play their part.

Clearly, it is also important to recruit those professionals who are most likely to help the experimental initiatives to succeed—they too must be chosen from the ranks of those staff ‘who know and care’. However, all staff, even those committed to co-production, may benefit by prior capacity building, so that they are equipped with the right skills to collaborate with citizen co-producers more effectively. What is perhaps equally important is that professionals need to be given the freedom to make mistakes, to admit them and to learn from them, which is often challenging in public sector organisations concerned about reputational damage, as discussed in Sect. 5.3. Of course, by definition, not all co-production initiatives are likely to be successful. Learning involves the need to ‘fail early, fail fast, fail cheap’ (Bovaird and Quirk 2017).

Consequently, it is important that it is not considered as a failure when some Co-Production Labs redesign or even stop some of their new co-production initiatives, as long as the co-producers involved have learned from this experience and shared their insights with other stakeholders. Clearly, such an open approach to experimentation and learning requires leaders who do not impose a risk-averse culture and who are prepared to encourage staff to innovate, in spite of the risks.

In order to shorten the timescale needed for major operational changes, it is likely that a range of experiments in these Co-production Labs will be helpful, so that the actors involved can reassure themselves that some of their fear of change is unjustified—and so that
those concerns which indeed turn out to be justified can lead to rapid adjustments before the new co-production approach has gone too far.

**Step 4: ‘Market it’**

Where new co-production approaches have the potential to be successful, it is critically important to market them appropriately. Step 4 is about marketing the improved outcomes and the achievement of public governance principles to existing and potential co-producers.

This involves assessing qualitative and quantitative improvements to outcomes and/or efficiency savings in order to demonstrate that the co-production initiative has already made a difference. While some outcome improvements may only be achieved in the long-term, some may occur quite quickly (e.g. where an isolated person is helped to take part in more social activities) and outcome assessment can often focus on some intermediate outcomes, e.g. indicators which suggest that positive behaviour change has already taken place. To get this message across, creative approaches such as story-telling and other social marketing mechanisms can be used. Of course, the longer-term evaluation of outcomes achieved will also remain important.

Another way of predisposing users and communities to take part in a co-production initiative is to promote the new ways in which citizen co-producers and public service organisations can work together. This may be done through the joint development of co-production charters, which explicitly outline desired forms of behaviours and governance principles, responsibilities, and incentives for citizen co-producers and staff but also makes clear what are the limits to co-production. This can reassure potential co-producers that their commitment is close-ended and that key risks concerned (for example, in relation to accident insurance) have been taken care of. It also reminds them of their rights as co-producers (for example, that they should not be coerced into co-production activities) but also of their duties and responsibilities when they agree to contribute to a co-production initiative (for example, that they should pay attention to health and safety regulations). Most importantly, co-production charters also need to include mechanisms to deal with conflicts.

If co-production charters are to be taken seriously, they need to be assessed on a regular basis—ideally through co-assessment with users or communities. Furthermore, governance assessments may be helpful to identify to which degree the implementation of priority governance
principles has been achieved. Ideally, this is done as a 360 degree assessment so that the perspectives of key stakeholder groups can be compared (Bovaird and Loeffler 2007). All of this evidence-gathering is part of the evaluation of co-production, which is covered in detail in Chapter 6.

**Step 5: ‘Grow-it’**

This step concentrates on embedding co-production at both strategic and operational levels in public services and communities through outcome-based commissioning and culture change.

Successful co-production initiatives which perform better than other service delivery mechanisms need to be mainstreamed in public services through commissioning. In Sect. 4.2 we discussed how commissioners can tackle social problems by commissioning co-production initiatives focussed on the prevention, treatment and support for recovery or rehabilitation from the problem. This requires a shift towards outcome-based commissioning, so that service providers focus on the achievement of agreed priority outcomes instead of narrow service specifications. In some cases, this may require decommissioning of less successful service delivery models. Of course, this is not always possible—it requires a competitive market with alternative service providers who understand how to put citizen co-production into practice. Above all, it requires courage on the part of commissioners to discontinue historical contracts, launch contracts with new providers and, quite often, face conflicts with long-term providers who may put pressure on local councillors to continue their contracts, even though new service providers may be more innovative and more oriented towards citizen co-production.

Furthermore, organisational cultures do not change in the short-term. This also applies to behaviour change in civil society. In order to promote co-productive behaviours among staff and citizens both the ‘software’ and ‘hardware’ of public services need to be changed over time at organisation and systems-level. Following the concept of the ‘cultural web’ of Johnson et al. (2014, 155–157), this requires an alignment of ‘hard’ elements of culture, such as control systems, power and organisational structures, with ‘soft’ elements, such as stories, symbols, rituals and routines.

In addressing the ‘hard’ elements of their culture, public service organisations often need to re-assess their performance management systems, in particular, so that co-production is promoted throughout the organisation. Co-production is only likely to be effective if it improves priority
outcomes. This requires the definition and testing of key outcome indicators and qualitative outcome assessments instead of detailed output indicators, which may be more easily measurable. Ideally, such outcomes frameworks should be co-designed by staff and service users.

In addressing the ‘soft’ elements of their culture, public service organisations need to ensure that their human resource management approach is not simply driven by ‘hard’ competency frameworks, tied to quantified skills and performance measurement, but rather recognises and rewards those staff who have particular competencies as community catalysts and enablers. Unless these behaviours are made explicit and clearly valued, it will be difficult to recruit the right staff, to reward staff putting co-production principles into practice or to identify staff not showing these behaviours.

Last but not least, growing co-production also requires a dramatic change in the power balance within public service organisations. In particular, this may require a more active role for local councillors as community connectors and guardians of governance principles, giving citizens more power vis-à-vis the bureaucracy.

In tackling changes to the ‘soft’ elements of culture, co-production roadshows may help to change stories, symbols and eventually rituals and routines. What is particularly powerful here is to get presentations from the people involved in the co-production initiative—citizen co-producers and frontline staff. For example, job seekers who have contributed to a co-production initiative in a local employment agency are likely to be more convincing than staff members in persuading other job seekers. Furthermore, they will also feel valued being showcased as ‘co-production champions’ (Loeffler and Schulze-Böing 2020). Research has shown that the most important explanatory variable influencing the motivation of citizens to co-produce is political efficacy—the belief that people can make a difference (Parrado et al. 2013; Bovaird et al. 2016). So a key issue in this step is how can public service organisations strengthen political efficacy? First, this requires that public service organisations highlight much more what difference users and communities are already making through everyday co-production. To get this message across, creative approaches such as story-telling and other social marketing mechanisms can be used. Secondly, extra capacity-building, either individually or in communities, can also increase the self-confidence of service users and other citizens.

Sustained behaviour change also needs to be underpinned by a range of financial and non-financial incentives to encourage people using services,
local communities, managers, people responsible for commissioning and delivering services, along with politicians, to co-produce better outcomes.

5.4.2 Using the Five Steps Framework

While the five steps change management model in Fig. 5.3 suggests a specific sequence for rolling out effective co-production approaches, many co-production processes in practice do not necessarily start with a rational planning process or involve an experimentation phase. Indeed, some co-production initiatives exist (even though often at a small scale) because co-production enthusiasts believe in them without being able to provide sufficient evidence to convince others to adopt or grow them. Such ‘emergent’ co-production approaches can be very effective—but by their very nature they can be very context-specific and difficult to scale out to other contexts. The change management process in Fig. 5.3 may help to systematise this emergent process, while leaving sufficient degrees of freedom to adapt it to specific contexts.

Similarly, a specific co-production initiative sometimes becomes fashionable, so that public sector providers ‘buy in’ to it, hoping to achieve the same results which have been achieved by the early adopters who developed it—this is an accusation sometimes levelled at organisations which have adopted the Esther model from Sweden or the Buurtzog model from the Netherlands. The problem here is that imitation can be a rather crude approach, missing the subtleties which made the original co-production initiative so successful in the setting for which it was devised and for which it was particularly appropriate, so that pure ‘mimicry’ can be quite unsuccessful. Again, the five steps process in Fig. 5.3 may help to ensure that the approach is tailored appropriately to each new context in which it is applied.

A key driver of the effectiveness of the change management process will be the skills and commitment of the staff who are responsible for leading it. This applies to the top management of the organisation, who must not only proclaim that co-production is embedded within the overall strategy and culture but also demonstrate by their actions (and budget allocations) that they believe in its importance. Perhaps even more clearly, it applies also to the frontline staff with most direct responsibility for the relationship between public services and citizens. Without each level of the organisation playing its own specific leadership role in the implementation of co-production, the change management process is vulnerable. In
some cases, it may be valuable to have a dedicated co-production officer responsible for embedding quality assurance in the co-production process from the start and disseminating lessons learnt. This allows co-production to be disseminated more speedily and clearly, when all stakeholders are playing their roles well. Perhaps more importantly, it also allows gaps in commitment and competence to be spotted early, so that remedial action can be taken. The key role of leadership in co-production is discussed in more detail in Sect. 5.5.

Change management always needs to be adapted to local circumstances. A local authority which is already very experienced with citizen co-production may wish to agree a co-production charter, as discussed in Step 4, so that new co-production initiatives are provided from the start with a governance framework. For other local authorities with little co-production experience this may seem premature, as stakeholders first need to engage in small-scale co-production activities to understand what rights and responsibilities are required. Therefore, this change management framework should be used in a flexible way. (We discuss the things that can go wrong with the governance of co-production in Sect. 5.6).

5.4.3 Challenges to the Change Management of Co-production

Managing the change to a co-production approach requires motivated co-producers. Most of the co-production literature has focussed on citizen motivations for co-production (Alford 2009; Van Eijk and Steen 2016). However, effective co-production initiatives require the contributions of a range of stakeholders, who are likely to be driven by different motivation factors. Furthermore, they are likely to have different mechanisms available to them, through which they can influence others to co-produce. The influence exerted by stakeholders on each other is likely be mutual even though not always equally strong. In particular, the way influence relationships are perceived will be different from stakeholder to stakeholder.

Table 5.3 sets out some propositions about which factors may motivate key stakeholders to co-produce in their organisation or community, as well as which influence mechanisms stakeholders may use to widen and deepen co-production. It is important to note that, just as citizens are likely to be influenced by other stakeholders (particularly by front-line staff of public and third sector organisations but also partially by managers and local councillors, depending on the issue), they as citizens are also likely to exert an influence, to varying degrees, in the other direction.
### Table 5.3 Motivation factors and influence mechanisms for co-production

| Stakeholder                                      | Motivation factors                                                                 | Mechanisms for Influencing other stakeholders                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service users                                    | In most cases intrinsic motivation is foremost, but for some co-production activities which can be easily monitored it may be appropriate to incentivise citizens through payments or other material rewards | Inspiring others by acting as a role model                                             |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Lobbying public services to give a greater role to service users                      |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Conferring legitimacy on co-production activities by their participation              |
| Communities                                      | In most cases intrinsic motivation is foremost, but for some co-producing activities, co-production can be incentivised by offering funds for local community organisations or improvement of local facilities | Inspiring others by acting as a template                                              |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Lobbying public services to give a greater role to communities                       |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Conferring legitimacy on co-production activities by their participation              |
| Politicians                                      | Better outcomes for constituents, Reducing need for unpopular service cuts, More votes from satisfied citizens, Promoting democracy by engaging citizens more in public sector decisions | Policies which embed co-production                                                   |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Agreeing budgets for co-produced initiatives and re-allocating budgets to successful co-production initiatives |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Setting and policing regulations which embed co-production                            |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Lobbying for policy change in other public service organisations                     |
| Front-line staff in provider organisations       | Many staff are motivated by the increased responsibility and job satisfaction they get from working with citizen co-producers | Valuing the contributions of citizen co-producers and showcasing them to others       |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Matching the capabilities of service users to needs of community members (and vice versa) so that citizen co-producers feel useful |
|                                                  |                                                                                     | Identifying and promoting emergent good practice in user/community self-organisation and helping to shape it to become co-production |

(continued)
on the other stakeholders. Again, creativity is needed in finding influence mechanisms which have a direct effect on a specific stakeholder—the generic examples given in Table 5.3 are only a starting point.

As Table 5.3 shows, motivation factors and influence mechanisms are likely to differ from stakeholder to stakeholder. This needs to be taken into account when designing a menu of incentives for turning stakeholders into co-producers. It is likely that incentive schemes will be more appropriate if they are co-designed with the co-producers concerned.

As Alford (2009, 197) points out, in the case of user co-production which involves simple tasks, material rewards may be appropriate. For example, in some countries such as the UK tax agencies have incentivised taxpayers to submit their tax declaration online by granting them more time for submission compared to paper-based filing. Material rewards may also be used in the case of community co-production, where the contribution of the community can be easily specified and monitored, as in crowdfunding schemes. However, if user or community co-production involves complex issues, intrinsic rewards are likely to be more effective (Alford 2009, 1997). Creativity is obviously needed here—an appropriate incentive for young citizen co-producers might be a certificate.
documenting their volunteer contributions which could help in job applications. In the case of elderly citizen co-producers, an invitation to a social evening where their contributions are recognised in public may be more appreciated.

The mutual influence mechanisms between citizens and elected politicians are core to co-production in representative democracies. In political systems characterised by democratic governance, citizens may exert political influence on politicians to agree to co-production approaches—this happens most obviously through their voting preferences in elections but it also operates through the use of their voice between elections. In the digital age social media now make voice mechanisms much easier to use, putting people in touch with other like-minded citizens.

In the other direction, some local authorities give councillors small-scale ‘community chest’ budgets at neighbourhood level in order to seed-fund community actions—e.g. the Borough of Berlin-Lichtenberg introduced community chests in 2010 to provide seed-funding for co-production initiatives at neighbourhood level (Loeffler and Martin 2016, 312). In some local authorities, the political leader (in some political systems, the directly elected mayor) invites particularly distinguished volunteers to a meeting or even for a meal to make them feel valued. Many local authorities also run annual awards to show how much they value volunteers—and this also typically provides photo opportunities for local politicians, which can help to cement their commitment, too. Some local authorities have also provided highly engaged volunteers with ‘bonus cards’ as a token of appreciation, giving them free or cheap access to public facilities such as swimming pools.

While only a few academic co-production publications have provided a dynamic perspective on citizen co-production (for example, Bianchi et al. 2017) time is a key issue in change management. In particular, different stakeholders often appear to have different perceptions of time. While professionals typically expect that setting up a co-production initiative may take a lot of time, many citizens can’t understand the slow decision-making processes in public service organisations, with the risk that they often lose interest. For example, the 750,000 volunteers who signed up to help the NHS in the early stages of the Covid-19 ‘emergency’ were disappointed to find that only 20,000 of them were allocated tasks during the first month (Hodder 2020). Change management of co-production may therefore be more successful when it focuses on small-scale and local experimentation to enable quick learning processes, which then
quickly influence decision-making. In line with normal design thinking, this suggests that co-producers need to have opportunities and permission ‘to fail early, fail fast, fail cheap’ (Bovaird and Quirk 2017).

Another challenge to change management is the lack of resources in contexts of austerity. In public service organisations, where staff are already stretched or experiencing frequent restructuring, it will be challenging to dedicate staff time to citizen co-production. While staff may be committed to implementing citizen co-production, they may also have other strategic and operational priorities, which may seem to them more urgent (and possibly more important) in practice than specific co-production initiatives. In these circumstances, citizen co-production may typically be considered as a ‘nice to have’, appropriate only where there are sufficient resources in public service organisations for implementation, such as external grants. Clearly, time is of the essence here—if it takes too long for co-production to become considered as a ‘must have’ in an organisation whose circumstances have tempted it to consider putting greater emphasis on a co-productive approach, by the time a positive decision is made, other priorities may have intruded and there may no longer be sufficient staff time or other resources to develop, improve and scale co-production. Therefore, a key challenge for the change management of co-production is to make timely use of any window of opportunity which occurs, so that co-production can be turned into a ‘must have’, while there is still some slack in the organisation to innovate.

There is also a major debate about the right mix of ‘inside-out’ and ‘outside-in’ change management for effective co-production. As discussed in Sect. 2.5, co-production may be initiated by public service organisations reaching out to citizens through an inside-out pathway; alternatively, through the outside-in pathway, it can build on local community initiatives. Brandsen et al. (2017) make the point that change management using an inside-out pathway entails the risk that citizen voice and action may be stifled by the typical bureaucratic governance in public service organisations. However, Brandsen et al. (2017) also recognise the danger that ‘truly spontaneous citizen initiatives’ may only focus on private value, which may even conflict with public value. This legitimises public interventions which seek to add professional knowledge, skills and resources to community initiatives through additive co-production, so that public value can also be achieved.

Another classical change management issue, which is highly relevant in the context of co-production, is the balance between top-down and
bottom-up management within public service organisations and local communities. There has been relatively little empirical research on either the extent to which more ‘bottom-up’ organisational structures, with highly participative staff, promote co-production with citizens.

More empirical research is also required to identify how front-line staff can be equipped with all the skills necessary to promote bottom-up co-production—and also to deal with the unlearning of old habits and practices which is typically also involved. There is evidence that social enterprises, with their more participatory work environment, offer staff greater possibilities of self-development and more responsibility (Pestoff 2019, 182–183) and this may encourage staff to seek increased levels of user co-production. However, more research is needed on how strong is this factor.

Similarly, little empirical research has explored the balance between bottom-up and top-down implementation at community level. It is often assumed that community initiatives are bottom-up by definition but this is mistaken. It depends on the leadership of self-styled ‘community leaders’—some may relish their power and seek to crush alternative ideas and initiatives, whereas other, more facilitative ‘community leaders’ may seek to share the role and indeed to bring on other community leaders.

Table 5.4 distinguishes between inside-out and outside-in pathways for the initiation of co-production initiatives from the point of view of public service organisations and the implementation of specific co-production initiatives by a public sector organisation, which may either be driven ‘top-down in a strongly hierarchical process or led by frontline staff, as bottom-up implementation. (A similar table could be constructed

| Types of change management strategies | Top-down strategies at organisational level | Bottom-up strategies at organisational level |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Inside-out strategies                 | Expert patient scheme in the UK           | Clean City Linköping, Sweden                |
|                                      | Environmental improvement scheme in Rimini, Italy | Cycling scheme with care home residents, Denmark |

Source Author
for community organisations, substituting ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ strategies at community level).

Co-production initiatives which are initiated by public service organisations and implemented from the top in a centralised way are likely to be most common. For example, in the UK the government pledged to implement an expert patient programme as the new NHS approach to chronic disease management and set out a commitment to implement this lay-led self-care programme in the 10 year NHS Plan published in 2000 (Donaldson 2003). By 2007, the Department of Health had invested £18 m in the programme, with an explicit goal of providing the course to 100,000 patients (Griffiths et al. 2007).

An example of a co-production initiative which took an ‘outside-in’ pathway from the local community to the local authority is the environmental improvement scheme CI.VI.VO. in the City of Rimini in Italy, which was initiated by a dissatisfied citizen who took action to tidy up a local part (Artuso and Montini 2016). This was followed by a number of meetings between citizens and the local authority to discuss how to scale this initiative. As a result, the project received formal approval of the Municipal Council on 18 October 2011 and was resourced with two full staff members and a manager to coordinate the volunteer actions—so the initiative was ‘outside-in’ in its conception but became ‘top-down’ in implementation.

Of course, some co-production initiatives are driven more strongly by front-line staff. In Sweden a city gardener and youth liaison officer were highly engaged in the launch and implementation of a new co-design project to tackle litter in the city centre of Linköping (Timm-Arnold 2014). This co-production initiative aimed at bringing about behaviour change of young people by co-designing environmental campaigns and improvement actions with them. Here the co-production arose ‘inside-out’ but was bottom-up in implementation.

An example of a bottom-up but outside-in co-production initiative is a Danish cycling scheme which involves volunteers offering free rides on bicycle rickshaws (funded by the local authority) to older people and people with disabilities who have difficulties getting around (Tortzen 2016). This co-production initiative was started in Copenhagen by a citizen who lived close to a care home in a residential part of Copenhagen and observed the residents out with their walking frames or being pushed around the block in their wheelchairs. His thought up the idea of providing care residents with more mobility, and also more company,
by taking them around in a bicycle rickshaw. A community worker picked up this idea and marketed it to the local authority, getting funding for five rickshaws initially. The so-called “Cycling Without Age” scheme is now run by a non-profit organisation and has been implemented by more than 60 Danish local authorities, with a total of 2500 volunteers. Furthermore, similar schemes are now being set up in 26 countries, based on an international license.

While all four approaches exemplified in Table 5.4 are clearly both possible and potentially interesting, it has to be recognised that co-production initiatives which are implemented bottom-up in public service organisations may fail to get the buy-in of political and other strategic decision-makers, no matter how well they work or how much they benefit from the hands-on experience of front-line staff. So even if there is evidence of improved outcomes, they do not necessarily continue to be supported by the public service organisation. More research is needed on how to overcome this barrier to scaling effective co-production initiatives which are bottom-up in conception.

5.5 Leadership for Co-production

5.5.1 Distributed Leadership Concepts and a Relational Leadership Perspective

While there has been a lot of debate on the role of power in the context of co-production, there has not been much academic research on leadership in co-production contexts until recently (for example, Schlappa 2017; Bussu and Galanti 2018; Schlappa and Imani 2018; Tortzen 2018; Schlappa et al. 2020). As Schlappa et al. (2020) point out, the dominant perspectives on public leadership tend to be rooted in the notion that leaders are the source of leadership and perform their roles within organisations pursuing goals that are pre-defined in political and managerial arenas. However, as we have already discussed in Sect. 5.4, in most co-production initiatives outcomes can only partly be planned and their achievement requires joint deliberation and/or co-ordinated action between professionals and citizens. For Schlappa et al. (2020) co-production highlights the limited value of the leader-centric perspectives in explaining how leading happens in contemporary public services.
Instead, concepts of distributed public leadership provide a much more appropriate theoretical lens for understanding leadership in many co-productive settings (Bussu and Galanti 2018, 358). Schlappa et al. (2020) suggest that in a co-production relationship, professionals do not, and perhaps should not aim to, assume a privileged position in relation to citizens, casting them into the role of followers of an appointed, or self-appointed, leader with power. Leading co-production is therefore a shared responsibility, involving professionals and citizens in contributing their skills, resources and authority to accomplish a particular task. Concepts of distributed leadership view leadership not as a characteristic of an individual but as an emergent property of groups or networks of interacting individuals who are enabled to contribute their wide range of expertise to the process (Bennett et al. 2003, 7).

Clearly, in a co-production context, potential leaders not only include members of public service organisations but also service users and local communities—it is often overlooked that co-producing citizens may also provide leadership through influencing front-line staff and even managers in a number of ways. For Bartels (2016, 359) “integrative, experiential and holistic” encounters between public professionals and citizens are key for developing effective modes of interactive governance, which enable new co-production initiatives. Within such co-productive settings, “every stakeholder can take a lead on specific issues” (Bussu and Bartels 2014, 2258). For example, in the falls prevention co-production initiative of the Health and Social Care Partnership of Aberdeen City, leadership is shared among group members, depending on their skills and interests. Everyone plays an equal part in the project and this releases a stream of rich and diverse ideas. As a result, there is endless scope to do things differently. One Falls Ambassador has started a ‘Conversation Table’ in the cafe at the Music Hall in Aberdeen and talks about falls prevention to any interested members of the public (Thompson and McConnachie 2019).

Consequently, Schlappa et al. (2020) propose an extension of distributed leadership concepts by conceiving a co-production process between professionals and citizens from a relational leadership perspective. This means that the co-production process is inherently negotiated, emergent and reliant on many actors, some of whom may have common motivations, while others have contrasting motivations. Each can exercise some power, which in turn is moderated by the context in which these relations occur (Schlappa et al. 2020). Such a relational perspective implies that co-production is not characterised by ‘equal and reciprocal
relationships’ between professionals and citizens, as power relationships are fluent and change over time. This conceptual framework allows Schlappa et al. (2020) to consider the context in which leadership occurs, the motivations the co-producers bring to the collaboration, and their power relations, as elaborated further in their chapter. Altogether, this shift from leader-centred leadership theories towards systems approaches in public leadership aligns with an understanding of public leadership as a collective phenomenon (Crosby and Bryson 2018, 1271).

So how can public leadership be defined in the context of co-production? Hartley and Benington (2011, 5) define public leadership as “a set of processes concerned with mobilizing action by many people towards common goals, and the framing of those goals”. This definition puts less focus on the qualities of individual leaders or their formal positions but rather considers leadership as a social process which has the purpose of mobilising collective action to achieve common goals.

However, user and community co-production of public services and outcomes does not always need to mobilise many actors, as suggested in the Hartley and Benington definition—indeed, user co-production may involve individual forms of co-production and even community co-production may only include small groups. Furthermore, leadership in co-productive settings often involves enabling joint learning processes resulting from individual or collective action. This needs to be reflected in the definition of leadership; we therefore define leadership of co-production as ‘a set of processes concerned with mobilising individual or collective action towards common goals, the framing of those goals and joint learning’.

Leadership for co-production by definition transcends all artificial borders. It typically involves “leadership across organizational and geopolitical boundaries, beyond individual professional disciplines, within a range of organizational and stakeholder cultures, and often without managerial control” (Van Dyke 2013, 4). For example, leadership in co-production may come from third sector rather than public sector organisations—especially where third sector organisations are believed to be closer to communities which are hard to reach for public sector organisations and where their specialist expertise gives them more credibility in helping people to change their behaviour and become co-producers. For example, the London Borough of Lambeth has commissioned the third sector organisation Mosaic Clubhouse to co-produce better health and wellbeing with their service users who experience mental health issues.
Mosaic Clubhouse is dedicated to a co-production model, based on the principles of the international Clubhouse Network (Ness 2014), and staff and members work side-by-side to carry out the work of Clubhouse—from administration to cooking meals in the Clubhouse kitchen. Again, in some countries such as Sweden, many small social enterprises such as the parent pre-school cooperatives (Pestoff 2019, 182) have developed a co-productive service model. However, not all third sector organisations provide leadership for co-production. Often, big national third sector organisations find it more challenging to reach out to citizens to engage them in co-production—and the influence of service users on corporate decisions of such big third sector organisations may be very limited. However, citizens can strengthen co-productive social enterprises by making use of them or by contributing their time and financial resources or, indeed, by setting up their own new social enterprises in order to co-produce better outcomes.

Van Dyke’s point that leadership must often operate “without managerial control” is particularly important. As Hartley and Benington (2010, 19) point out, collaborative leadership theories have typically emphasised the importance of exerting influence and not control. Our suggested definition of leadership for co-production views leadership as a set of processes occurring between those trying to influence and those being influenced with regard to a specific issue. The latter may again influence others to take specific actions, so there is no longer a neat separation between ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ but a set of relationships of mutual influence.

Leadership for co-production also requires appropriate learning processes. In many cases, co-production initiatives will focus on complex issues where stakeholders first need to agree on their framing of the problem concerned, before experimenting with potential solutions. Clearly, co-producing solutions in complicated or complex knowledge domains is a much more challenging leadership task than tackling tame problems in simple knowledge domains, as characterised by Snowden and Boone (2007). Indeed, Heifetz et al. (2009, 19) state, “the most common leadership failure stems from attempting to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges”. Complex issues are closely linked to complexity theory, which is at the heart of concepts of systems leadership.

One of the key propositions of complexity theory is that the characteristics of a system emerge from the behaviour of the system as a whole, and cannot simply be predicted by looking at individual properties of the
system (Koliba and Koppenjan 2016, 264). One implication for the leadership of complex systems is that it is only by observing the system-wide consequences of leadership actions that we can develop our understanding of the system in which we are attempting to lead. This is illustrated by the case study of Services for Young People in Surrey County Council, which provided a number of third sector service providers with co-production training in order to support them to achieve shared outcomes for young people categorised as NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) (Bovaird and Loeffler 2014). The first round of commissioning involved an intense learning process for both commissioners and service providers. For example, the commissioning of the Local Prevention Framework was highly innovative, as young people were involved in the commissioning process and the budget was devolved to Local Committees at borough-level (Bovaird and Loeffler 2014, 22). Where doubts arose about performance of providers delivering the Local Prevention Framework during the first round of contracts, a rapid response was made, changing the model and recommissioning the services in a way which quickly proved to be effective (Bovaird and Loeffler 2014, 36).

Here, there was explicit recognition of the complexity of the system-wide interconnections between all the variables influencing the employability of young people and therefore that accurate forecasting of outcomes in advance was impossible. Leaders at different parts of the system were responsible for suggesting, implementing and monitoring experimental ways forward, then learning and adapting in the light of experience.

As the example from Surrey CC shows, a key element of systems leadership is action learning. Typically, learning processes in organisations have focussed on cognitive learning. However, user and community co-production also generates tacit knowledge—a concept widely associated with Michael Polanyi (1966), who focused on the ‘tacit coefficient’ of scientific reasoning, which he conceptualized as the ‘intuitive’ grasp of ‘reality’ grounded in the power of a ‘potential discovery’ to ‘attract the mind’ and ‘impart intimations’ so that it may eventually ‘emerge into reality’. The challenge of systems leadership is to overcome the boundaries between cognitive and tacit knowledge, so that professionals and citizens can learn from each other in co-production processes. Furthermore, action learning implies learning from mistakes. This is a big challenge in many organisations. In particular, many public service organisations are heavily risk adverse and have developed a blame culture, which strongly reinforces this. However, systems leadership requires a culture which
enables co-producing citizens to take on acceptable risks, rather than simply minimizing risks, as discussed earlier in this chapter. A key element of this culture must be trust—and this trust must characterise relationships throughout the system, not just at some levels. For example, while some public managers may have the trust of their political leader to experiment with new types of co-production, so that their leaders simply let the co-producers get on with it, other public managers may have less access to politicians and lack such trust relationships. As a result, the political leadership may decide to cut funding, even of successful co-production initiatives. Clearly power relationships should not be perceived as static but rather as negotiated between people who collaborate to achieve shared outcomes. As Schlappa et al. (2020) point out, this dynamic understanding of power as processes of influence is integral to the analysis of how co-production is being led, as power will shift between professional and citizen co-producers according to their expertise, knowledge, resources and status, as well as the stage which the co-production process has reached.

This puts the debate on ‘imbalances of power’ in a different perspective, as relational conceptions of leadership recognise that power is not just based on formal authority but on how co-producers influence each other. For example, the neighbourhood initiative “Pride of Place” in Bristol was initiated by a small number of local residents of a social housing estate who were concerned about littering on the estate and who started to walk around the estate with key staff of the Bristol Community Housing Foundation and noted down issues of concern (Jacobs-Lange 2011). The list of issues was then logged onto a database by the Community Development Worker and farmed out to the relevant staff member or external agency to follow up—a traditional bureaucratic process. After only two months of walkabouts, residents felt they would like to deal with the street litter directly while they actually walked around, so the organisation running the housing estate invested in litter pickers, a pull-along garden truck and high-visibility tabards, so that litter picks could be incorporated into the walkabouts. Walkabouts were advertised in advance and the group started to attract some additional members, including new residents. The Bristol Community Housing Foundation then gave the title of ‘Street Rep’ to the residents volunteering in these environmental activities and started a recruiting campaign, which led to a further 34 residents applying to become Street Reps—giving coverage in the majority of
streets. A local resident said: “Being a Street Rep has really made a difference to the amount of pride people take in their neighbourhood. Other residents see our group in the area and recognise us as their neighbours; this helps to raise awareness of the need to do their bit to keep the area tidy” (cited in Jacobs-Lange 2011). This co-production approach, which places residents in the driving seat, together with the strong relationships between the volunteers and local police and waste management staff, has helped to change the dynamics of neighbourhood management in the area away from dealing with a simple list of anonymous issues to a setting where relationships drive action and all co-producers start to appreciate each other’s position.

However, Garven (2013, 116) cautions that “co-production may be an option only for the most sophisticated and experienced groups and even they may be less than enthusiastic …”. As Alford (2009, 183–201) points out, the two key preconditions for citizens to co-produce are willingness and ability to make a contribution to improve public services or outcomes. Both of these preconditions may be addressed through a stronger emphasis on place-based leadership, including the development and implementation of new kinds of civic leadership programmes, which target under-represented groups at the local level, as currently practiced in the City of Bristol (Hambleton 2019, 276), which involves elected politicians, people working in public services, business, local communities and trade unions co-creating new solutions to public problems.

Summing-up, concepts of distributed leadership have the merit of highlighting the role of influence in mobilising collective action to achieve shared objectives through co-production. While there is no lack of taxonomies of collective leadership concepts, further empirical public leadership research is needed to analyse the relationships between influence (or power) and motivation factors for co-production within specific contexts. For example, to what extent are front-line staff willing to work overtime to experiment with new types of co-production in their organisation? This may depend not only on their values and their belief that this is the right thing to do but also on the influence of their top managers. As Alford (2009, 197) points out, inducing citizens to co-produce “is a matter of increasing the salience of the value which the client receives from the service by making its non-material aspects – intrinsic rewards, solidarity incentives, or normative appeals – more explicit”. This requires relational leadership but also knowledge of motivating factors and the right types of incentives for specific stakeholders.
Last but not least, relational leadership is enabled and constrained by institutional contexts (Schlappa et al. 2020). For instance, co-production in Tortzen’s (2018) Danish case study ‘Zebra City’ in the Municipality of Roskilde is characterised by a mixed governance mode, with elements of ‘new public governance’ and ‘new public management’. On the one hand, professionals aimed to enable community initiatives in public housing estates with a high proportion of vulnerable groups by strengthening community networks—a typical task of public governance. On the other hand, staff had to achieve targets such as a specific number of new community initiatives within a specific period and to recruit a specific number of new volunteers for local voluntary organisations (Tortzen 2018, 113)—a typical managerialist approach.

More research is needed on how relational leadership from the top may (or may not) support co-production between front-line staff and citizens. And how much leadership from ‘the bottom’ by front-line staff and citizens is possible in a representative political system, where local councillors are accountable for public governance principles and the results achieved?

5.6 **Negative Sides of Co-production and Ways of Addressing Them**

Not only the results of citizen co-production matter but also the way in which they are achieved. (This will further be discussed under our definition of public value in Sect. 6.2.) Here we first examine how co-production may, in some circumstances, reduce outcomes; then in the following sub-section we explore how co-production may sometimes contravene key public governance principles. In the final sub-section we look at some aspects of the ‘dark side’ of co-production, where it contravenes legal, regulatory or moral codes.

Stakeholders involved in co-production therefore need to balance how it helps to achieve priority public outcomes and governance principles, against the negative effects it may have—this will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.6.1 **Negative Impacts of Co-production on Outcomes and Ways of Addressing Them**

In this sub-section, we examine how co-production can have negative effects on public services and outcomes—see Table 5.5. In fact, the
### Table 5.5  Negative impacts of co-production and ways of addressing them: typology and examples

| Types of negative impacts | Examples | Possible ways of addressing negative outcomes |
|---------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------|
| Publicly-desired outcomes of co-production initiative have not been achieved | Some kinds of volunteer activity is not appropriate to reduce the number of NEET young people in Surrey County Council (Tisdall 2014) | Re-design of existing co-production initiative Decommissioning of ineffective co-production initiative |
| Unfavourable or negative cost-benefit ratio | The ‘Family-Nurse-Partnership’ Programme has positive results but also high costs for public sector organisations (Loeffler and Trotter 2012) | Reduced costs of paid staff by using more peer support Increased use of digital technology to reduce cost of building and maintaining social networks among young parents |
| Deterioration of service quality | Insufficient training and support or bad coordination of volunteers working with paid staff in libraries in the UK (Baber 2018) | Proper induction of volunteers Better use of assets of volunteers (for example, language skills) More flexible working times to ensure paid staff and volunteers have convenient and sustainable work schedules |
| Loss of jobs by professionals | Library services increasingly co-delivered by volunteers (BBC 2016) who replace professional roles in UK libraries | Reallocation of staff to other tasks (e.g. training library users) Retraining of staff to move to other services (e.g. evidence gathering for service reviews) |
| Exploitation of citizens engaged in co-production initiatives | Volunteers who are effective in co-production are pressed to get involved in more and more co-production initiatives (Baber (2018, 6) | Widen the number of volunteers Increase the use of digital technologies, so co-production activities take less time or effort by citizens Better professional support of volunteers Peer support of volunteers |

(continued)
Table 5.5  (continued)

| Types of negative impacts | Examples                                                                 | Possible ways of addressing negative outcomes |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Creation of new dependencies | Some volunteers working with local authorities in Germany initially solved issues for refugees instead of helping them to help themselves (Schiffauer 2017, 23–24) | Training of volunteers in the principles of co-production Providing citizens in target group with more opportunities to make a contribution (e.g. as peer trainer) Developing peer support for citizens in target group |

Source Author

academic literature provides relatively few case studies with evidence of negative impacts arising from co-production with citizens, so the examples here often draw on government reports or other grey literature. In many cases in Table 5.5 the negative impacts highlighted are likely to be stakeholder-specific and may therefore be counterbalanced by positive impacts experienced by other stakeholders.

A co-production initiative is likely to be judged unsuccessful if publicly desired outcomes have not been achieved. This is, of course, unfair—the relevant question is to what extent any change in public outcomes has been caused by citizen co-production? This requires the measurement of the level of outcomes before and after a co-production initiative is implemented. This is, however, not so easy—as discussed in Chapter 6, many co-production initiatives lack clearly defined priority outcomes and, even where they exist, they may take a long time to become apparent and may be evident in quite different places and experienced by quite different people from those involved in the original co-production initiative. Moreover, when co-production initiatives involve wicked issues, we need to recognise that not all pathways to outcomes can be defined ex ante and that some changes to outcomes are likely to emerge unexpectedly during the co-production process. Our evaluation approach, therefore, has to recognise emergent outcomes as well as planned outcomes—and even if some intended outcomes have not been improved, co-production may have achieved some publicly-desirable unintended outcomes.
Notwithstanding these issues with understanding the causes of outcome changes, it has to be accepted that co-production will not always impact positively on outcomes. An example is the support of Surrey County Council for volunteering initiatives in order to reduce the number of young people who were categorised as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). A review of services for young people undertaken by Surrey County Council in 2010 concluded that whilst there were over 1000 youth organisations in Surrey working with volunteers to deliver over 11,000 hours a week of provision (there is more capacity than young people have free time) young people were not taking full advantage of these (Surrey County Council 2010, 6). In spite of these offers of support, including much volunteering, the number of NEET young people had remained constant around 1000 between 2003 and 2012 (Tisdall 2014). It was recognised as likely that the work of volunteers had created other positive outcomes, such as increased wellbeing of the volunteers and the young people they worked with—but this probably did not bring much benefit to disadvantaged young people, since it was other young people who were already thriving who were mainly able to make use of the available services and support for young people. Surrey County Council therefore decided to transform Services for Young People, based on a new portfolio of services targeted directly at NEET young people (Tisdall 2014). This included the development of new, more effective co-production initiatives such as the Volunteer Host Service for young people at risk of homelessness and a restorative justice approach for young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

However, the decommissioning of service providers is quite difficult in the context of public services, where it is often not possible simply to stop or phase out ineffective co-production initiatives (Bunt and Leadbeater 2012). Many professionals and elected councillors are also reluctant to put a stop to volunteering activities, as they consider volunteering as beneficial per se. It is therefore often easier to address ineffective co-production initiatives by redesigning them—and, indeed, systems theory suggests that experimental approaches with iterative redesign and learning loops are key to social innovation.

Even if a co-production initiative achieves positive outcomes, the question remains: at what cost? If the cost-benefit ratio for the public sector organisation is negative, commissioners are likely to consider alternative, more cost-effective public service models. The same question
arises when the cost-benefit ratio of a co-production initiative is positive but at a high cost for the public sector. One example of this is the Family-Nurse-Partnership (FNP) Programme, which is a licensed preventative co-production programme from the USA which aims to improve outcomes for young first-time mothers and their children (Olds 2006). It aims to enable young teenage parents to achieve positive outcomes for their child and their own development. The co-production approach is based on an intense relationship with a specially trained Family Nurse, from early pregnancy until the child is two years old. During a programme of home visits, the FNP nurse builds a therapeutic relationship with the young parents to enable them to strengthen their parenting skills and resources, whilst also developing and realising their own aspirations (Loeffler and Trotter 2012). Even though there is evidence of a range of positive outcomes from the USA (Olds 2006) and Scotland (Ormston et al. 2014), the costs of the programme in Scotland have been estimated to be high, at approximately £3000 per annum per client who completed the programme (Loeffler and Trotter 2012). One way of creating a more positive cost-benefit ratio could be to reduce the contributions which have to be made by the nurse, by developing a peer support network among young parents, which might also be supported through digital technology.

While volunteering is often considered as positive per se, co-production with volunteers in public services may also be perceived negatively if it is done badly, so that community co-production leads to a deterioration of service quality (and potentially worse public outcomes). Baber (2018, 4) highlights issues of consistency and reliability when libraries rely on volunteers, such as casual and sometimes erratic attendance, which can result in disruptions to the service and damage to its reputation. Clearly, managing volunteers is quite a challenge, when the role of a volunteering manager is simply added to a person’s day job as a librarian—for example, in North Somerset Council one librarian who previously managed five part-time staff now has to manage one full-time staff member and 102 volunteers (Baber 2018, 4). However, these issues can be addressed in a number of ways: For example, more experienced volunteers may provide support to staff to skill up new volunteers. Effective use of the strengths of volunteers may also enable staff to increase the existing service offer through community activities, in particular, if volunteers come from diverse groups. However, as an interview with a library manager cited by Baber (2018, 7) suggests, the vast majority of volunteers attracted by the
library services of an English local authority are not fully representative of local ethnic and age groups. Last but not least, more flexible working times and the use of digital technologies could also help to coordinate the co-production of staff members with volunteers.

However, substitutive forms of co-production which replace significant staff inputs by unpaid citizen inputs are likely to lead eventually to fewer paid staff in the service. While this may bring about politically desired savings, and potentially increase the efficiency of public service delivery, this impact is likely to be perceived negatively by the staff concerned. While there is, so far, no direct quantitative evidence on the extent of job losses due to co-production in any public service, the analysis of the BBC (2016) concerning the impact of cuts in library services in the UK is revealing: According to data compiled through the Freedom of Information Act from 207 local authorities responsible for running libraries, in the six years after 2010 some 343 libraries closed and a further 174 libraries were transferred to community groups, while 50 were handed over to external organisations to run. At the same time, the number of unpaid volunteers working in libraries doubled from 15,861 to 31,403, while paid staff decreased from 31,977 to 24,044. Clearly, if public libraries are transformed into community libraries without any support from the public sector, this is no longer a case of co-production but rather community self-organisation. However, many public libraries which are run by local community groups do also get support from the Library and Information Service of the local authority, so remain examples of co-production. For example, the transformation of the library services in Vale of Glamorgan Council in Wales led to five libraries run by local community groups with support from council’s Library and Information Service, in addition to 4 remaining libraries run by full-time staff (Vale of Glamorgan Council 2019).

There are several ways of addressing the impact of citizens substituting roles previously undertaken by paid staff. The staff concerned may be reallocated to other tasks, for example, training new groups of library users or spending more time with library user groups who have complex needs. In some cases, of course, staff who have been substituted by citizen co-producers may have to retrain in other services. These could be services which can make use of some of the librarian’s old skills, e.g. information management or gathering evidence for analytical activities in the organisation, such as service reviews. However, if there is political agreement that substitutive forms of co-production are undesirable, the implication is
that co-production cannot contribute to making budget savings in public services.

Another negative impact of co-production which is identified in the literature is demotivation of volunteers, which may result in ‘burn-out’. In particular, as Baber (2018, 6) points out, external pressures may push volunteers “to take on more work than they were initially able to, and outside their capabilities. Untrained volunteers may not be able to cope with increased and unattainable expectations and workload”. This may lead to frustration among volunteers and in some cases, make them unwilling to continue volunteering. Such overuse or misuse of volunteers can be avoided through widening the network of volunteers, e.g. by tapping into the social network of existing volunteers, since they often know people with similar interests who may be willing to become co-producers.

Even in contexts of austerity citizen co-producers need to be supported properly. Professionals may help them to provide peer advice and support to each other. In particular, professionals need to recognise that the interests of citizen co-producers are likely to change over time and that different co-production offers are needed at different points of time to maintain sustainability.

Another emerging but unintended result from ineffective user and community co-production may be the creation of new dependencies between ‘helpers’ and ‘those being helped’. In these cases, professionals or even volunteers working with public service organisations, rather than helping citizens to help themselves, focus on solving most problems on their behalf. At the extreme, where citizens are asked to do little or nothing to help themselves, such relationships would not qualify as co-production as defined in this book. However, typically there is at least a minimum level of user input but it is not built upon to create the fully co-productive relationship which could be available. An example is the attitude and behaviour of some local citizens who volunteered to help refugees arriving in Germany in 2015. Some public officers suggested that, in some cases, the help offered initially was more than the refugees actually needed and risked creating new dependencies, However, Schifffauer (2017, 23–24) suggest that this changed over time, as engaged citizens shifted to co-producing better integration with refugees rather than ‘taking care of helpless victims’.

Finally, the literature also considers ‘deprofessionalisation’ as another negative impact of co-production (Baber 2018, 8). However, as Tuurnas
(2015) suggests, this may be a necessary step in breaking down professional barriers and enabling professionals and citizens to co-produce more effectively.

5.6.2 Pitfalls in Public Governance from Co-production

The literature also discusses a number of negative consequences on the implementation of public governance principles which can arise from user and community co-production. Most of these pitfalls in public governance are not unique to co-production but can also occur in other forms of collaboration, such as partnership working between public sector organisations and public, private or non-profit organisations.

The normative concept of ‘good governance’ highlights a number of governance principles such as accountability, transparency, engagement, sustainability, equalities and the rule of law (Loeffler 2016, 210–211). While there is a considerable similarity between the various lists of good governance principles promoted by international organisations, what good governance means in practice has to be defined in context-specific ways. Given that it is impossible to implement every desirable governance principle simultaneously, stakeholders need to agree on strategic governance priorities. Inevitably, trade-offs have to be made between specific governance priorities—and also between the achievement of outcomes and governance principles (see Sect. 6.2 on public value).

Clearly, the implementation of agreed public governance principles requires resources. Moreover, public governance implies the adoption of certain rules and regulations governing people’s behaviour, and some of these are often perceived by citizen co-producers (and indeed by staff in public service organisations) as ‘red tape’. For example, accountability requirements may imply that stakeholders engaged in co-production need to write an annual report to give an account of outcomes achieved. We therefore have to recognise that the frequent calls by social innovators for public service staff to ‘break the rules’ need to be treated with some caution, since some rules at least may be critical to ensuring the implementation of agreed governance principles.

Table 5.6 considers key pitfalls in public governance resulting from co-production and how to address them.
Table 5.6 Public governance pitfalls from co-production and ways of addressing them

| Types of pitfalls in public governance | Public governance challenges | Examples | Ways of addressing public governance pitfalls |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Lack of accountability               | Service users, communities and volunteers and professionals need to give an account and be held to account for their joint actions and decisions | Many volunteer board members of non-profit childcare organisations in Manitoba lack capacity and sufficient delegated authority to give account and receive little government support (funding or training) to understand legal and regulatory frameworks (Levasseur 2018) | Providing minimum training of citizen co-producers in regulatory framework and accountability mechanisms Effective professional support to help citizen co-producers in public reporting, e.g. through story-telling Ensuring sufficient delegation of authority to citizen co-producers |
| Lack of transparency                 | Need for easily-accessible information and procedures on the contributions of co-producing stakeholders | Confidential peer support group meetings run by ‘experts by experience’ with background in mental health issues (Tatam 2011) | Quality control (e.g. through user surveys) Co-Production Service Charter Independent advocacy with powers to scrutinise |
| Lack of sustainable engagement      | Maintaining a stable and reliable level of service user and community contribution to co-production | In Modena, the energy that went into co-design and co-maintaining the website Stradanove shifted to the social media initiative Younge (www.younge.it) | Recognising that results need to be sustainable but that co-production initiatives change over time Providing appropriate incentives Bringing on new citizen co-producers |
| Increasing diversity and addressing inequalities | Attracting a suitably diverse range of citizens who are willing to co-produce | Volunteers working in public libraries in Wirral do not come from many diverse backgrounds (Baber 2018) | Enabling the strengths and skills of citizen co-producers from diverse backgrounds Working with third sector organisations as intermediaries to widen recruitment pool ‘Go where people are’ to recruit a wider range of citizen co-producers |

(continued)
One of the so-called seven evils highlighted by Steen et al. (2018, 285) is the lack of clear responsibilities resulting from co-production and co-creation. However, when accountability is shared between public service organisations and citizens in the context of co-production, this does not automatically imply “failing accountability” (Steen et al. 2018, 285). Quite the opposite: Shared accountability may imply additional layers of scrutiny and audit beyond traditional forms of government audits, e.g. through trained citizen inspectors or citizen co-assessments. However, there are also cases where co-production initiatives are not supported by appropriate accountability relationships. Levasseur (2018) provides a case study of child care in the Province of Manitoba in Canada where the government of Manitoba provides child care working with non-profit organisations, whose volunteer board members must also include parents. Interviews with board members revealed that more than half of the board members considered that they lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to adequately meet their accountability obligations (Levasseur 2018, 35).

Another constraint upon accountability stems from limited delegation of authority from the government to the boards of service delivery organisations, as tight government regulations on, for example, the provision of childcare restrict the actions available to board members. Levasseur (2018, 41) concludes that “while coproduction is limited to
service delivery, there is a disproportionate burden of accountability whereby citizen co-producers, and their fellow board members, bear the majority of risk and accountability with little support from their counterparts—government co-producers”. Finally, Levasseur (2018, 37–38) also identifies that parents may have limited ability to hold the service delivery board to account. This means that there may be a triple accountability challenge in a co-production context: citizen co-producers may have difficulties in giving account both to government and to the public for a variety of reasons, while service users may have to deal with a lack of transparency when they try to hold co-producers to account.

While these accountability challenges may not be completely avoidable, they can be addressed in a number of ways: First of all, it is possible to strengthen the ability of citizen co-producers to give an account by providing some minimum training. For example, in the Manitoba case study (Levasseur 2018), volunteer board members were provided with such training during their induction. At the same time, it would be unrealistic to expect many volunteers to be keen on accountability-oriented tasks, such as report writing. This is typically the strength of professionals. However, professionals can support citizens to make a meaningful contribution to reporting exercises, e.g. through story telling. At the same time, professionals need to be prepared to give citizen co-producers a genuine role in decision-making, as they cannot be held to account for decisions for which they are not responsible.

Lack of transparency and lack of accountability often go hand in hand. If citizen co-producers cannot provide appropriate information about their actions or decisions to governments or the public, there is both lack of transparency and problems in holding them to account. However, transparency is not just about information. It implies that co-producing stakeholders act according to fixed and published rules, on the basis of information and procedures that are accessible to the public. Implementation of this governance principle must also ensure that people have easy and effective access to information or other ways of scrutinising the actions and decisions of stakeholders involved in co-production.

An important issue is the degree to which transparency can be implemented in co-production relationships which require a high level of trust. In such contexts, the monitoring of the contributions of service users and communities may be perceived as an indication of lack of trust. For example, when service users who are ‘experts by experience’ in mental
health issues (and who are trained or supported by public service organisations) provide peer support to people with mental health issues, they need to engage in confidential conversations. If professionals attended the peer-support meetings for monitoring purposes, this might put the trust relationship between the peer supporters and their peer support group at risk. However, there are normally some ways of developing trust relationships while ensuring a mutually accepted level of transparency. For example, in the case of the Lambeth Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Programme, the peer trainers asked their peers to fill out a survey after each training session to allow quality control (Tatam 2011).

Another way of ensuring transparency involves stakeholders coming to agreement on a ‘co-production service charter’, as discussed earlier in Sect. 5.4 (under Step 4 of the Co-production Star toolkit), so that there is transparency as to which contributions can be expected by each party and how possible disagreements or conflicts will be dealt with. For example, a draft Co-Production Charter was developed for a co-production project to improve the wellbeing of people living with dementia in a Scottish local authority. It defined the rights and responsibilities which all parties should expect from each other, including standards of behaviour which they pledged to maintain but also what was supposed to happen if these pledges were not met (Brown et al. 2016, 38–39). However, for the implementation of such a co-production charter an independent advocacy function is needed. Advocacy organisations are particularly important to ensure transparency in co-production initiatives where vulnerable service users are involved, who do not know where to access relevant information or how exactly to scrutinise the actions and decisions of stakeholders involved in co-production.

Another key governance challenge to co-production identified in the literature is the sustainability of user and community co-production, as social innovation often turns out to be local and temporary (Brandsen et al. 2016). However, from a service user point of view, many public services are also short-term experiences, as delivery models keep changing and some services may even be cut due to austerity, and, importantly, their need for the service may be only temporary. There is, therefore, a need to rethink the concept of sustainability in the context of social innovations. Clearly, in complex adaptive systems it makes no sense to hope that a co-production initiative will stay the same for ever. What should be sustainable are the improved outcomes but not the way in which they are co-produced. This applies in particular to digital innovations in the public
domain which have evolved over time. For example, Modena Council in Italy had co-designed the youth website *Stradanove* (http://www.stradanove.it/) with young people in 1997. After some years, while the website was still being maintained by both young people and professionals working together, the number of website visits had dropped, as young people had moved on to social media. The new social media network *Youngle* (http://www.youngle.it/) in Italy now provides young people in participating regions with a safe social media network to engage with other young people and access services relevant to them.

So taking into account that the only thing likely to be permanent is change itself, how can sustainability in co-production be addressed? Obviously, this raises the issue of what motivates citizens (Alford 2009; van Eijk and Steen 2014, 2016)—we discussed this in Sect. 5.4. Furthermore, as citizens are likely to change their interests over time, there is a need to attract new co-producers, rather than just relying on current citizen co-producers to be able and willing to make the same contribution for a long period of time. Of course, current co-producers also have an important marketing role to play in attracting new co-producers through ‘word of mouth’.

At the same time, relying on viral marketing through current co-producers may be limited, if we wish to increase diversity amongst co-producers. As a library manager from Wirral, cited in Baber (2018, 7), complains: “The vast majority of our volunteers are elderly, white and middleclass, retired teachers, engineers, etc.”. Similar concerns about who engages in co-production were reflected in the views of representatives of public service organisations who were part of a focus group study in Germany—a very large majority of participants in the public safety focus groups, more than half of the participants in the health and social care focus groups, agreed with the statement that “Citizens often do not want to get engaged – it is always the ‘usual suspects’” [translation by the author] (Löffler et al. 2015, 19, 24 and 29). Therefore, professionals also need to reach out to new groups by meeting them where they are, instead of asking them to attend public meetings in public spaces which many citizens may perceive as an intimidating or uncomfortable environment.

Another key governance principle is equality. Steen et al. (2018, 287) raise concerns about reinforced inequalities through co-production, given that not all communities or service users have the same ability to co-produce and that “wealthy and highly educated citizens may come to
dominate such processes, as is often the case with classical types of participation, because of their superior social and cultural capital”. However, user and community co-production is different from public participation, as it is not only about citizen voice but also about citizen action, which calls upon different aspects of social and cultural capital. If we look at ‘citizen action’, co-delivery most requires the contribution of those ‘who know and who care’. This is even true of some ‘citizen voice’ modes of co-production, particularly co-design and co-assessment. These people are not necessarily those who shout the loudest, nor are most confident or articulate—rather they are the people whose ‘expertise through experience’ is most relevant to improving services and outcomes and who are most willing to put effort into making these contributions on a sustainable basis.

Of course, many potential citizen co-producers are not even be aware of their strengths and resources or have the necessary self-confidence to make a contribution through co-production (Garven 2013, 116), so those citizens who initially make themselves available for co-production initiatives may not be those whose contribution is likely to be most useful. This is why more public service professionals need to be provided with enablement skills (Tuurnas 2015), so that they can strengthen the self-efficacy of less confident citizens. At the same time, intermediaries such as third sector organisations may be more effective than public sector staff in engaging with vulnerable citizens. However, public sector staff themselves should be encouraged and helped to become more creative in building relationships with communities.

Last but not least, compliance with the rule of law may be a governance challenge in co-production, particularly when rules are perceived as a barrier to co-production. There are two common reasons why this occurs. First, there is the possibility (indeed, the likelihood) that some citizen co-producers (and even some staff in public service organisations) may not be aware that their behaviour violates rules. This is dangerous, since there is presumably a reason for these rules to be in place. One way to avoid this is to provide minimum training to citizen co-producers. For example, volunteers co-delivering environmental initiatives may not be aware of health or safety regulations. For this reason, the Environment Champions Programme of Solihull Council provided health and safety training to new volunteers (Hine-Hughes and Edgell 2013). This is even more important in public safety co-production initiatives, such as the Street Watch Programme in Weyhe Council close to Bremen, where
volunteers received a two-day training programme during a week-end so that they knew their own responsibilities and the responsibilities of the police (Meyer and Grosser 2014).

However, there are also rules which may restrict co-production initiatives or even make them virtually impossible to implement. In such circumstances, citizen co-producers and entrepreneurial public service staff may decide to take some ‘short-cuts’ in order to speed-up co-production initiatives. While it may be valuable to make sure that co-production initiatives proceed quickly and are tailored to fit the specific circumstances of the context, rather than some abstract regulatory template, there is also the potential that such flexibility may result in some negative consequences—again, that is presumably why the rules were developed in the first place.

In these cases, stakeholders may seek exemption, at least for a limited time, in order to experiment and learn. Such waivers do occur for the introduction of managerial approaches—for example, in the 1980s innovative German municipalities could apply to their state government for waivers to their statutory duties, which were supposed to grant innovative municipalities more regulatory freedom (Banner 1987). However, there is not much evidence of legislators (or auditors) granting even time-limited waivers to enable social innovations. Consequently, public sector organisations sometimes have transferred co-production initiatives to third sector organisations, which often have a more flexible regulatory framework. Alternatively, innovative public sector organisations which wish to engage in co-production may change the question they ask themselves—rather than starting with the traditional question: “Are we allowed to do this?”; they can engage in a new conversation with their legal department by asking: “Given that this is what we want to do—can you show us how to do it within the current regulatory framework?”.

5.6.3 Some ‘Dark Sides’ of Co-production

Discussing the ‘dark side of co-production’ needs to be done with caution. The term ‘dark side’ has acquired a sinister connotation by its use in completely different contexts—for example, the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups have been described as the dark side of the nonprofit sector, while networks of corrupt organisations, such as the Mafia, have sometimes been classed by network scholars as “dark networks”.

Some authors have discussed the ‘dark side’ of co-production in the rather less sinister context of the negative public governance consequences which can arise from co-production, such as lack of shared accountability, reinforced inequalities or the weakening of democracy (Steen et al. 2018)—what we have called above the ‘pitfalls of public governance’ arising from co-production. However, we will use the term ‘dark side’ in this book to describe some behaviours which are specifically illegal or immoral. This means that an overall negative cost-benefit ratio of a co-production initiative is not considered as ‘evil’ or ‘dark’, but simply as a negative result of co-production, as discussed in Table 5.5.

One dark side of co-production involves the use of pressure through moral coercion. For example, some public service organisations, particularly in the third sector, recruit young people as unpaid interns and use them for a protracted period of time as core members of the workforce, rather than developing their skills through giving them experience of a range of jobs, e.g. through shadowing staff members in a variety of positions. In many OECD countries there are regulations in order to prevent such misuse of the time and efforts of volunteers such as interns but, even where such treatment is legal, it represents coercion which is likely to be seen as immoral by many stakeholders, since it seeks to take advantage of young people who, in the context of high youth unemployment, are willing to accept exploitative experiences in the hope that these may ultimately provide a pathway to a paid job. Such treatment is therefore a dark side of co-production.

Some examples of moral coercion are not quite so clear cut. For example, it is common in many OECD countries that benefit payments to unemployed people are made conditional on job seeking or participating in training activities, even when they have disabilities or illness. Typically, sanctions are imposed if such benefit claimants cannot demonstrate regular attempts to engage in training or job searches. However, this can be problematic. In the UK, for example, over 56% of appeals against such sanctions have been successful in recent years (BBC 2019), demonstrating how inappropriate the original determination of sanctions has been. Yet only a small minority of people who are sanctioned appeal, although it is clear that far more would be likely to win such appeals—here the claimants have bowed to moral pressure to which they have been subjected. This could well be viewed as the use of immoral coercion, and therefore to constitute part of the ‘dark side’ of co-production.
In other public services, too, it is important that expectations placed upon communities and volunteers by public service organisations are reasonable and that moral coercion is not exercised. This applies, in particular, to vulnerable user groups such as people with health issues who cannot be expected to make a full contribution when they are in the middle of a crisis. However, it is equally remiss to give up on such people entirely as potential co-producers, simply because they have ‘bad days’.

The most extreme examples of the ‘dark side’ of co-production occur when professionals or citizens (or both) engaged in co-production do not comply with the rule of law but misuse their role by engaging in illegal activities, e.g. corruption, infringement of privacy or illegal discrimination or harassment. Examples here would include Street Watch volunteers accepting a bribe not to report a crime they come across during a patrol; or revealing information about service users gained in their co-production activities, which should remain private; or harassment by co-producing citizens of some vulnerable service users.

These examples all involve deliberately damaging behaviour by co-producing citizens. However, some illegal co-production behaviours may be prompted by intentions which are originally good. For example, cases of value incongruence can occur when service users, communities and volunteers do not share and conform to the values of the public service commissioners and providers and go too far in attempting to achieve the outcomes to which they are committed.

Co-production in public safety is often considered to be particularly risky because vigilante behaviour may break out on the part of co-producing citizens (Loeffler 2018, 219). While the police do, from time to time, praise citizens who directly tackle criminals, it is recognised that this can be very risky. The fact that they are not trained means that they are more likely to be injured in such actions. It also means that they can make mistakes in identifying what crime is being committed and take inappropriate action to tackle it. A widely cited case study demonstrates how this can go seriously wrong, where a member of a Neighbourhood Watch group unjustifiably shot an unarmed teenager in a gated community (Williams et al. 2016). Clearly, such irresponsible and unacceptable vigilante behaviour may jeopardise the public value created by other members of the Neighbourhood Watch group, and thereby may call the whole co-production initiative into question.

However, in devising our risk management strategies, we need to take account of the fact that there are also cases of misuse of roles and powers
in non-co-produced forms of service delivery—for example, there are many recorded cases of misconduct of police officers. This reminds us that all service delivery models entail risks. Setting up a risk assessment and risk management system to reduce cases of illegal or immoral behaviour is a complex task and it would be foolhardy to believe that co-production approaches will, in principle, turn out to be either more or less successful than traditional public service delivery approaches in reducing the risks experienced by citizens in relation to their desired outcomes.

Some co-production schemes may also operate in the grey zone of the informal sector. For example, from the point of view of a national tax agency, time banking could be seen to replace paid transactions in the marketplace with non-monetary exchange, based on time. Indeed, Finnish tax authorities adopted new taxation guidelines in 2013 which required taxing skilled work services received through timebanks according to their market value. Helsinki Timebank contested this decision, arguing that it destroyed the essential principle of equality at the heart of timebanking and called for an exemption from taxation (Peltokoski et al. 2017), an appeal that was ultimately unsuccessful (van der Wekken 2019).

5.7 Conclusions

In this chapter we focused on the challenges facing co-production, which must be overcome if co-production is to become more widespread and systematic as an approach to improving public services and outcomes.

We developed a conceptual framework for understanding the barriers to citizen co-production, distinguishing between contextual barriers, organisational barriers in public service organisations, and barriers arising from the characteristics and behaviours of both service users and communities.

While these barriers are indeed significant, there are many potential strategies by means of which they can be tackled. In particular, we have explored the need for risk enablement, rather than risk aversion, in public services, so that it is not inevitable that low levels of outcomes are aspired to and achieved, because only the lowest levels of outcomes can be fully assured. To make this change to a risk enablement strategy, it is important for public services to put in place a whole-system resilience network,
whereby each key stakeholder in the network is covered by appropriate resilience mechanisms, including service user resilience, community resilience, service provider resilience and market resilience.

This chapter also discussed how a core change management tool (the Governance International Co-production Star) can be used, both to understand the barriers to co-production but also to develop approaches which will overcome these barriers. The various stages of implementing a full co-production strategy—‘Map it’, ‘Focus it’, ‘People it’, ‘Market it’ and ‘Grow it’—need quite different skills and approaches. While we have illustrated the use of this tool by demonstrating that many case studies have successfully undertaken each of the steps in the Co-production Star, it is clear that few public service organisations have been able successfully to implement all of these steps in a coherent strategy—this remains probably the biggest challenge in the field of co-production.

Finally, this chapter considered the potential for negative consequences from co-production. Co-production of public services and outcomes with citizens is not a panacea. As discussed above, co-production initiatives may fail to deliver positive results or may lack ‘good enough evidence’ of improved public services and outcomes. Furthermore, co-production involves costs both for public service organisations and citizens. Unless the cost-benefit ratio for the involved stakeholders is positive—at least in the medium or long-term—it is unlikely that the results of co-production initiatives will be sustainable. Moreover, the distribution of costs and benefits of co-production may be unequal. In particular, there is a risk that disadvantaged communities are put under more pressure to contribute to improve public services and outcomes than more affluent communities, which may be more effective in getting the public services they want, with lower contributions from themselves (Brandsen 2020). Last but not least, the way in which co-production initiatives are planned and implemented may not correspond to key public governance principles—and may even be illegal or immoral.

There is a need for both researchers and stakeholders involved in co-production to evaluate the effectiveness of each co-production strategy, including assessment of its benefits but also its potentially negative impacts and governance pitfalls. In the next chapter we turn to this evaluation task.
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