

Co-producing justice: community involvement in prisons and probation

Council of Europe 2016

www.coproducingdesistance.org.uk

Twitter: @Coprod_Desist

Dr. Beth Weaver

beth.weaver@strath.ac.uk

University of Strathclyde,
Glasgow



The Meaning of Community

- *Community life...is not a place, or simply a small-scale population aggregate, but **a mode of relating**, variable in extent (Calhoun 1998).*
- *The persistence of community consists in its ability to communicate ways of belonging...community as belonging is constructed in communicative processes rather than in institutional structures [or] spaces...[it is] **a form of experience about belonging** as opposed to emphasis on an underlying sense of morality, a group or place (Delanty, 2003)*

Community Involvement

- **Means:** building relationships with the networks that comprise civil society:
 - *voluntary and faith based organisations, community groups and mutual aid societies – as well a host of other formal and less formal social and community networks*
- **Effects:** contributes to a range of individual and service-level/organisational outcomes.
- **How:** through a co-productive approach.
 - *‘The public sector harnessing the assets and resources of users and communities to achieve better outcomes’ (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2013)*
- **Implies:** a radical reinterpretation of relationships between services, service users and communities in criminal justice; a different way of ‘doing’ services – towards a sense of ‘we-ness’.

Co-producing Justice

- You can't impose a pre-planned structure for people to fit into.
- Coproduction is not an end state it is a dynamic and changeable process that evolves over time.
- The environment (relational and physical) can shape opportunities for everyday participation (or conversely constrain them).
- Embedding a culture of collaboration and coproduction is key.
- Coproduction can't be an add on – engaging with service users and involving communities takes time and it needs to be resourced.
- Time, trust and relationships are central to supporting the participation of service users, community volunteers and other groups.
- Coproduction requires the development of a continuum of informal and formal opportunities that are both accessible to and meaningful for the people you seek to 'involve'.

What co-production / community involvement can look like

- Utilisation of existing community resources:
i.e. asset or community mapping; organisational/harnessing the assets in your communities; professional involvement in/with communities.
- Peer and community support networks (formal/informal):
i.e. Mutual aid groups, peer support, community volunteers – mentors, citizen circles, COSA: examples of community involvement in services (out with role of NGOs/Voluntary Organisations).
- Social Cooperation – The Italian Way:
coproduction between services, culture of cooperation and inclusion; investing in and embedded within communities.

Summing Up

www.coproducingdesistance.org.uk

- This relational WE that has much to inform not just *how* we support people but the *nature* of that support, as well as how we involve and get involved in communities.
- This implies the need for services to become more relationally informed, more asset based and participatory, more community facing and more community engaging.
- Building *and* sustaining the trust required for meaningful involvement needs to be properly resourced.