

N-Power Workshop 3

Co-production in neighborhoods. Walking new ways with courage

26.11.2020, online-conference, 9.30 – 15 h, 17 participants

Report: Rita Frensch

https://padlet.com/axel_jansen/koproduktion_im_Quartier

Summary: content and results

Sustainable development of cities and communities becomes possible through cooperation of all actors such as administration / politics, civil society, business and universities. And this also requires support from all levels of government. The global 17 Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) show how many topics are to be shaped in modern society. Some can be easily implemented at neighborhood level, with invitation to joint commitment at the very center. Urban development from neighborhood level has its limits in structural aspects such as housing, energy supply and similar aspects.

Urban transformation is taking shape between region and neighborhood (see Schneidewind 2019, Rat für nachhaltige Entwicklung 2020). Here the Interreg project N-POWER in the Euregio Maas-Rhin comes in: to enter new territory in neighborhood development and to involve its population in a creative, integrative and sustainable development process (<https://www.n-powerinterreg.eu>). N-POWER stands for neighborhoods, for empowerment and also for n'joying new paths of joint urban and district development. Model projects are implemented in various cities and accompanied by action research. As a concrete practical result from the series of workshops, guidance and online courses are planned in which best practice examples from our region and from outside are presented and made accessible to an expanded, European target group.

In the third German-language workshop of the N-Power training programme on the subject of methods and tools for co-production, the focus was on concrete experiences from model projects, in a online-conference under der moderation of Rita Frensch (KreaScientia) and Axel Jansen (Bleiberger Fabrik). Based on central ideas of neighborhood development and management of the city of Aachen, current strategies of co-production were first explained. Dr. Marius Otto, social planner for the city of Aachen, presented the district management concept from 2017 with regard to new approaches to co-production (see powerpoint in appendix). A pilot project of co-production for the city of Aachen was the project "Quartier 55plus am Westpark", funded by the program "Altengerechte Quartiere" of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (2018-2020). The project was presented by Marion Bergk (as former project coordinator) and active citizens participated, too (more information see powerpoint in appendix).

The co-production existed on the one hand between the city of Aachen and the old people's home St. Elisabeth. At project level, there were many contacts with other organizations and initiatives fort his special target group. With regard to foster participation aiming to take special needs into account, the project manager has also set up a "Project Development Team" with voluntary citizens who develop ideas as low-threshold offers and also implement them in practice.

Participation and health prevention were explored jointly and tried out individually - in advance of or in addition to well-known classic infrastructure offers such as old people's homes and care centers. The first project phase was completed at the end of August and the continuation is being jointly developed (<https://unser-quartier.de/55plus-am-westpark>).

In the afternoon, all participants were invited to contribute their own project experiences and explore new perspectives together. Representatives from Eupen-Bergviertel and Aachen-Nord reported as members of N-POWER network model projects. Representatives of the social work of the Catholic and Protestant churches as well as Caritas as a welfare association also attended from Aachen. Individual questions and organizational issues were exchanged in small groups. Finally, various questions could be discussed in more depth in the plenary session.

In this transnational online-conference, representatives from local administrations in Eupen and Aachen, from civil society organisations and active citizens in dialogue showed again what we already achieved. It was a very friendly cooperation and, thanks to the attitude of mutual consultation, through co-production this workshop was a well-rounded affair. As an online conference, it was a new shared experience that, thanks to the lively moderation and committed participants, was also a successful encounter as a daytime event - from an abstract concept to a concrete pilot project to many small and tried-and-tested suggestions from everyday business of neighborhood development which can make life easier in the sometimes demanding neighborhood development (see list of participants in appendix).

Summary of the results according to central questions:

1. Why is co-production a good approach in neighborhood development?

Knowledge, talents, skills and commitment of the many are needed for neighborhood development. Community development in professional sense is carried out by various actors such as advisory, meeting and support services and municipal employees as "guides" for various needs. Citizens are everyday experts who are needed as users and implementers for all municipal measures to make sure that they have an impact (top-down). From another perspective, involvement and participation create an expanded offer, e.g. as seniors are engaged for a senior-friendly neighborhood in which "culture of aging" is lived creatively and innovatively (bottom-up). Local entrepreneurs are increasingly bringing their ideas and resources to these networks, thus strengthening local economy in these processes. This is how neighborhood development becomes a joint effort.

2. How can co-production be developed, organized and evaluated and set up sustainably?

At the beginning of co-production there is often inspiration and courage to establish new contacts, to develop new paths in dialogue and walk them together. Being open to other perspectives, understanding despite differences in communication and appearance, building trust with patience - as communication at eye level on project level in a vertical structure between politics / administration on one hand and citizens on the other. This requires relationships between people, networks beyond organizations, structures such as programs and financing, motivations that often go beyond day-to-day business, shared values and reliability. Finally, also stabilization in sense of a sustainable effect, in which effects on actors and target groups are described, questioned and checked for their future potential. And from this point a perspective how to integrate outcomes and people in existing structures.

3. How can citizens be informed of these new approaches?

A heterogeneous group of citizens and actors needs just as many different formats and channels of information and communication. While some can be easily approached via various media channels and forms of public relations, others need low-threshold offers and concrete tangible actions in everyday life in order to be able to experience co-production. The project management in neighborhoods usually has an individual tool case for tools and methods that are tested step by step and build on experience. The questions of transparency and accessibility always remain topical (see also workshop A on target groups that are difficult to reach).

4. How can citizens be given the chance to participate in such developments in their neighborhood?

An “innovation-ready administration” with a citizen-open approach seems to be a good starting point. The focus of a successful neighborhood development is always on people who are settled in the respective area. The location of the district in the city as a whole and the type of house building and real estate have a decisive influence on the social structure. The “art of participation” is to develop tailor-made offers and seeing the strengths of all people - recognizing and fostering special skills of everyone in joint development / implementation / active participation. This works best with residents and not for them. The precondition is once more trust and openness as well as time and patience in an open-ended and sometimes slow process that follows different laws than known professional processes. And here is also needed openness of citizens towards administration / politics on the one hand and towards local economy on the other (see also workshop B on new spaces for citizen participation).

5. And how can these approaches be used in (disadvantaged) neighborhoods to improve everyday quality of life?

Through transparent information and communication, open and low-threshold participation, consideration of needs and strengths of target groups according to age, origin and milieu in the neighborhood, support of interests that lead to an everyday quality of life and which enables residents to exercise their own responsibility and to experience their self-efficacy, their rights and their duties and thereby strengthen them.

In this complex and very interwoven field of work, “guides” are needed who know different target groups and find ways to bring them together. This also includes finding finances for neighborhood development and participation. And to communicate and evaluate the scope of activities and the concrete effectiveness of various initiatives in simple language.

6. What examples are there as a learning model in co-production?

- ⇒ Co-production between administration and civil society: Project 55plus at Westpark
- ⇒ Co-production between administration and company: Aachen-Nord
- ⇒ District conference as an instrument of decentralized social development in co-production with organizations in the district: entire city of Aachen
- ⇒ Organizational innovations through cooperation with actors who represent the needs of special groups of residents, such as people with disabilities or resident groups 55 plus or 65 plus

Note: Possibilities always depend on the structures that have evolved in the district. Transfer of learning models is basically possible if they are adapted to the given context.

Methods and tools of co-production using the example of Project 55plus at Westpark

Preparation and support:

- ⇒ Citizens' forum e.g. as a kick-off -> foundation of PCT
- ⇒ 30 expert interviews and scientific study in cooperation with Katholische Hochschule, Aachen
- ⇒ Participation in further training offers (website, etc.)

Methods and tools of communication:

1. Networking (internal / external)

- ⇒ Cooperation partner in co-production
- ⇒ Project sponsor in the network city of Aachen, St. Elisabeth retirement home
- ⇒ Actors in the neighborhood such as churches and social organizations
- ⇒ Neighborhood conference Westparkviertel
- ⇒ Citizens in the neighborhood (some of them building a new (leadership) community)
- ⇒ Specialist institutions in the context of work with the elderly (local / regional)

2. Moderation of group processes, in a broad variety

3. Coordination of offers / activities

- ⇒ Participation in nationwide, global events such as World Seniors Day with Silent Disco
- ⇒ Offer of new events such as fair "health day" in Westpark

4. Public relations -> website, newsletter, flyer and self designed invitation cards

5. Outreach activities social work -> Bench as consultation meeting point in Westpark

6. Low-threshold offers

- ⇒ Sport in the park
- ⇒ Walks
- ⇒ Knitting café and Repair café (stopped because of Corvid) in cooperation with St. Jakob
- ⇒ Community garden St. Jakob

7. Series

- ⇒ Lively advent calendar
- ⇒ Conversations in neighbor's garden

8. Digital networking -> virtual breakfast meeting

Afternoon interaction session

1. Stabilization for sustainable project activities

The question of perpetuation affects every project, because projects are usually launched to create a time-limited space for innovation. Often, at municipal level no funds are earmarked for project funding. And financing of permanent structures lies outside of project funding programs. That is why the question arises again and again how project results can be stabilized at the end of funding and people engaged can be supported further on. The best solution is to identify early from within the project people or structures able to make sure a long-term sustainable further work.

Helpful for further planning:

- ⇒ Network analysis: Who is involved, how are people interested? Who could contribute to stabilization?
- ⇒ Impact analysis: What or who is effective where? How and where are signs of stabilization before the end of the project?

A connection to existing structures enables docking at the end of the project and further work, maybe within a different rhythm. Instead of the usual dramaturgy of project start, climax and conclusion circular work enables to deal creatively with continuity. In doing so, leadership and control can be left to others. Sometimes many different project fathers and mothers tend to create a somewhat chaotic project setting, while at the same time the potential for connection increases for the purpose of perpetuation.

Note: Think about questions of stabilization right from the start, work more circularly and always think in between about the further course and develop the question of sustainable project management together. Where are there ideas and pitfalls for stabilization? What does a loose connection need and what does a permanent connection need?

2. Supervision of voluntary work as human resources

In neighborhood development, the focus is on people who plan and carry out actions, who understand complex processes and are able to develop and maintain a wide range of communication channels. Volunteers need personnel management and group leaders who take responsibility to ensure results, make transfer possible and guide complex processes - that is what "volunteering needs full-time" means. Classic volunteering is often associated with serving others and cost savings for the organization to which volunteers are bound. Volunteering in modern sense creates spaces of better life based on own interests and talents by sharing ideas and time with other.

Citizen engagement as a generic term for diverse activities from classic volunteering to independent citizen projects requires transparency and freedom, recognition and mindfulness, respect and appreciation in all facets. And above all, expectation management is needed that clarifies various concepts and attributions in communication and thus strengthens self-image, for example:

Volunteering: in the classic sense, selfless service to one's neighbor

Voluntary work: based on own interests and talents

Citizen engagement: work out innovation for issues that are in your own interest, e.g. sustainability

Assume responsibility, yes, but within limits, so that volunteer work is not continued as professional jobs "under a different sign". It became clear that in general older volunteers are less willing to take on responsibility after retirement than young people who still want to pursue a career.

3. Local economy

Communities of companies in local economy, corporate social responsibility (CSR), sponsoring and fundraising, alternative forms of economy with new approaches in welfare economies are some examples of how entrepreneurship and civil society are increasingly moving towards one another. If sustainable communal development needs all actors, then entrepreneurs are also in demand. Companies want to contribute for different reasons: such as a family company with an emotional local connection, out of a need for skilled workers, to get involved with a social contribution aiming to bind employees through it or - very recently in Corona times - as local company to raise awareness of customers and to retain customers.

Examples of cooperation with companies:

Example A: Create an intersection between actors

+ Entrepreneur interest in skilled workers, interns

+ Youth club is interested in supporting young people

Format: Business days of action, where people can meet and get to know each other through small, concrete actions

Example B: "Good thing"

Exchange of monetary service

+ Network company provides advice on digital infrastructure, software

+ Training location provides team days for company executives

Example C: Cooperation with a pharmacy

+ Senior citizens' organization is looking for lecturers for information events for migrants

+ Local pharmacy seeks direct contact with customers as an advantage over internet pharmacy

In addition to the link between local government and civil society, the link between business and civil society seems to be gaining importance from both sides. Here, too, many new paths can be explored together in terms of co-production. It makes sense to acquire knowledge and to differentiate well between concepts in communication and planning according to sponsoring, fundraising, advertising campaigns - also in terms of mutual expectation management.

Sources:

Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (2020): Kommunen als zentrale Akteure nachhaltiger Entwicklung. Stellungnahme an den Staatssekretärausschuss für nachhaltige Entwicklung zur Sitzung am 15.02.2021, Berlin 20.11.2020 https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20201120_RNE_Stellungnahme_an_den_StS-Ausschuss_fuer_Nachhaltige_Entwicklung_zur_kommunalen-Nachhaltigkeit.pdf (checked 04.12.2020)

Schneidewind, Uwe (2019): Die große Transformation. Eine Einführung in die Kunst gesellschaftlichen Wandels, Frankfurt a. M. (3. Aufl.)

Appendix

Marius Otto: *will be sent later*

Marion Bergk: „Quartier 55plus am Westpark“ (Powerpoint)

Appendix 1

Liste of participants

Name	City	Function/organisation
1) Assent, Luc N-Power	Eupen	Leiter Ephata, Mitarbeit im Projektteam Eupen
2) Becker, Helmut	Aachen	Ehrenamt Quartier 55plus, PET
3) Bergk, Marion	Aachen	Projektleitung, Quartier 55plus, PET
4) Burtscheidt, Alina Eupen	Eupen	Kommunikationsbeauftragte der Stadt
5) Fleig, Benjamin	Eupen	Projektleitung N-Power
6) Frank, Birgit	Aachen	Leitung, Bleiberger Fabrik
7) Frensch, Rita	Aachen	KreaScientia (Moderation)
8) Hiss, Franz	Aachen	Ehrenamt, Quartier 55plus, PET
9) Jansen, Axel Moderation)	Aachen	Leitung, Bleiberger Fabrik (Co-
10) Krebs, Irene	Aachen	Vorstand, Fauna e.V.
11) Mann-Kirwan, Monika	Aachen	Gemeindereferentin, St. Jakob
12) Otto, Marius	Aachen	Sozialplaner, Stadt Aachen
13) Rawak, Miriam Erde	Aachen	Quartiersmanagerin, Aachen-Ost/Rothe
14) Overs, Ulrike	Aachen	Sozialpädagogin, Ev. Kirchengemeinde
15) Pursey, Mona	Aachen	Promotorin, Eine Welt Forum Aachen e.V.
16) Simon, Friederike	Aachen	Ehrenamt, Quartier 55plus, PET
17) Tenkleve, Nils	Aachen	Projektleitung, N-Power Aachen-Ost
18) Wilczek, Meike Aachen	Aachen	Gemeindesozialarbeit, Caritasverband