



6th Current Business Issues
in African Countries
2025

Co-Production as a Governance Tool for Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities

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The aim:

How can the co-production of public services contribute to fostering sustainability initiatives and advancing sustainable development?

Content of the presentation

1. Introduction

2. Sustainability and Governance: Principles, Dimensions and Public Participation

- ▶ Sustainable development: definition, dimensions and principles
- ▶ Citizen participation in sustainable development

3. Co-Production and Its Role in Sustainable Governance

- ▶ Co-production of public services
- ▶ Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

3. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Introduction

- ▶ Sustainable development has become a central objective in global governance, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.
- ▶ In recent years, citizen participation has gained prominence as a crucial component of governance and sustainable development, as it plays a critical role in fostering inclusive decision-making processes that reflect diverse societal interests and enhance democratic legitimacy (Dryzek, 2002; Della Porta, 2013).

Introduction

- ▶ Within this broader shift toward participatory governance, co-production has emerged as a transformative approach to public service provision.
- ▶ Co-production become a governance tool that enhances collaboration between **governments, citizens, and civil society** (Bovaird, 2007).



2. Sustainability and Governance: Principles, Dimensions and Public Participation

Sustainable development: definition, dimensions and principles

- ▶ Popularized by the Brundtland Report, defining it as:
“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p. 43)
- ▶ Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept commonly structured around three key dimensions (Teodorescu, 2015) :



Environmental



Social



Economic

Sustainable development: definition, dimensions and principles

Principles Guiding Sustainable Development

- ▶ Intergenerational equity: Long-term sustainability for future generations (United Nations, 1987).
- ▶ The precautionary principle: Taking preventive measures despite scientific uncertainty (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1992).
- ▶ The polluter pays principle: Internalizing environmental costs (Dernbach, 1998).
- ▶ Common but differentiated responsibilities: Greater accountability for developed nations (Brodhag & Taliere, 2006).

Citizen participation in sustainable development

- ▶ The final decade of the twentieth century witnessed a strong deliberative turn in democratic thought, where legitimacy became increasingly tied to the capacity of individuals to engage in meaningful deliberation regarding collective decisions (Dryzek, 2002).
- ▶ The rising prominence of sustainability has prompted government officials and scholars to explore how participatory processes can enhance the development of local sustainability programs (Baber & Bartlett, 2005).

Citizen participation in sustainable development



Citizen participation in sustainable development

- ▶ Thinyane (2018) highlights that the importance of citizen participation in sustainable development is deeply rooted in the core principles that have guided the formulation of the 2030 Agenda.
- ▶ The data revolution has enhanced citizen participation in policymaking, and the UN leveraged it through consultative mechanisms to ensure diverse voices, particularly from marginalized communities, shaped the global sustainability framework (Fox and Stoett, 2015).

3. Co-Production and Its Role in Sustainable Governance

Defining co-production

“ The provision of services through regular, long-term relationships between professionalized service providers (in any sector) and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions. (Bovaird, 2007, p. 847). ”



Examples of Co-production activities

■ Neighborhood watches in the UK
(see: McMullin, 2018)

■ Patient associations in the Netherlands
(see: van Eijk, 2017)

■ Parents associations in Morocco



Forms and Levels of Co-Production

According to Bovaird (2007):

- ▶ **Co-commissioning:** Citizens identify needs and priorities.
- ▶ **Co-design:** Stakeholders contribute to policy and service planning.
- ▶ **Co-delivery:** Citizens take an active role in implementation.
- ▶ **Co-assessment:** Evaluation of services with citizen feedback

Importance of co-production in public governance

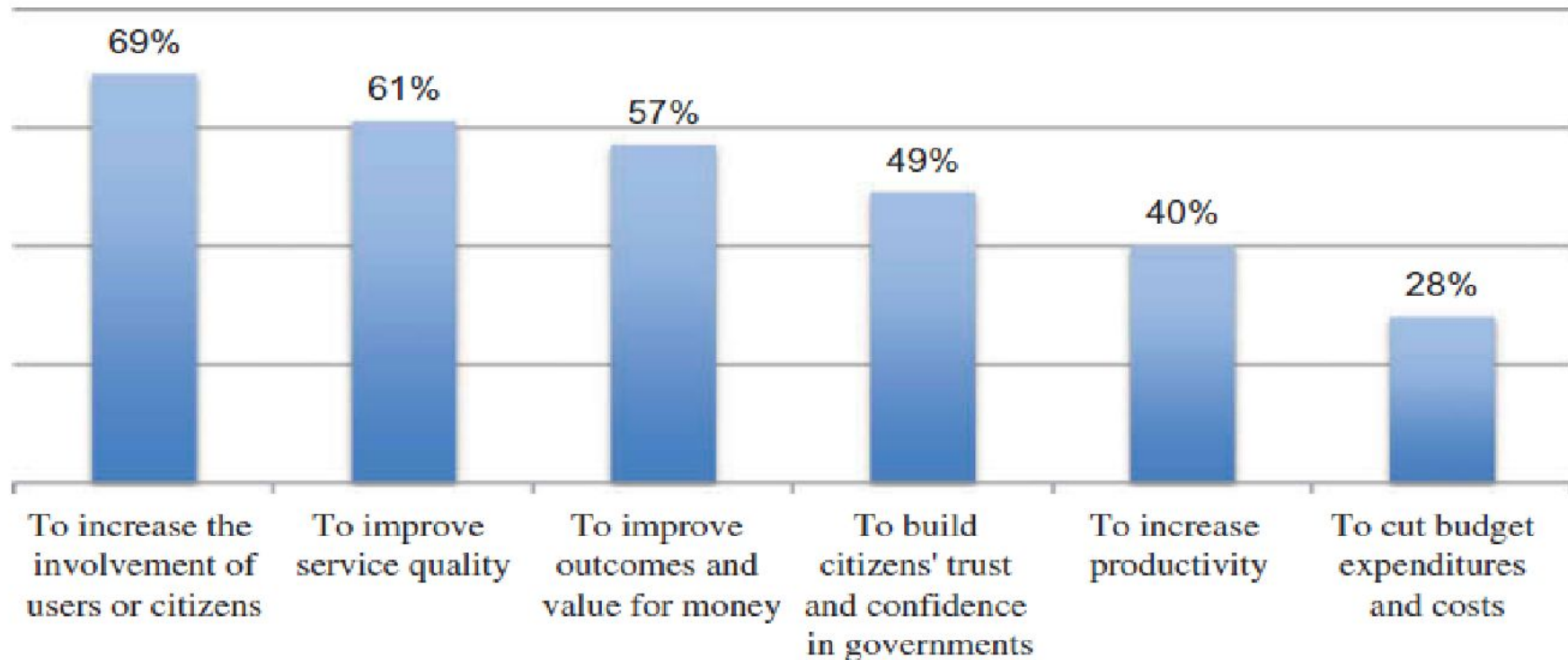


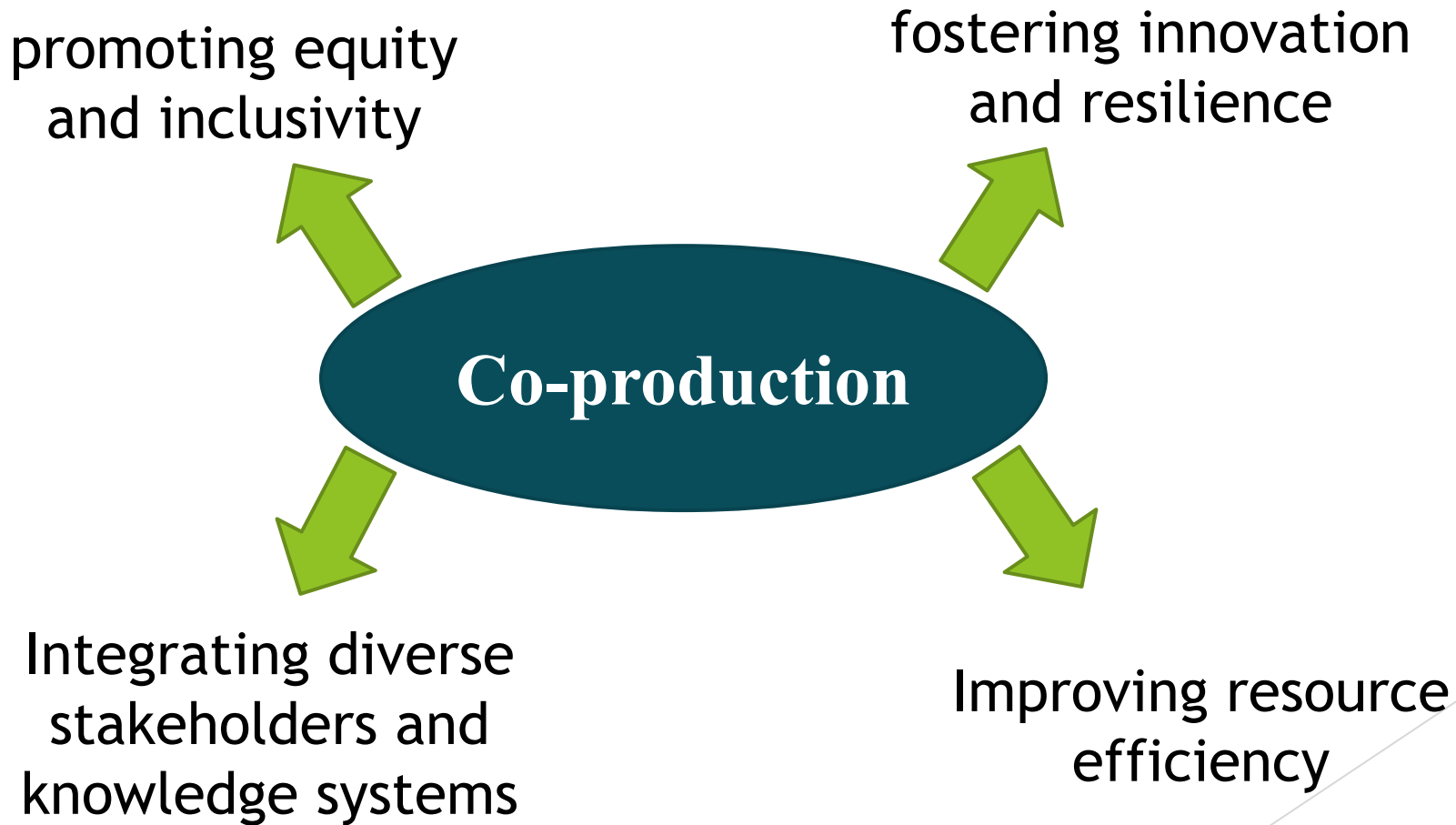
Figure 1: Reasons for partnering with citizens for public service delivery

Source: OECD (2011: 48)

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

- ▶ Sustainable development requires governance approaches that integrate social, economic, and environmental objectives while fostering collaboration among various stakeholders.
- ▶ Co-production has emerged as a cornerstone in the governance of global sustainability as it is reshaping the approach to environmental management through active citizen participation (Miller and Wyborn, 2020)..

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development



Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Integrating diverse stakeholders and knowledge systems

- ▶ Addressing sustainability challenges requires not only scientific and technical expertise but also local and experiential knowledge, which is often embedded within communities.



Through co-production, citizens and local organizations actively participate in shaping sustainability policies and programs to ensure that solutions are contextually relevant and aligned with community needs.

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

improving resource efficiency

- ▶ Many sustainability challenges stem from inefficient resource use, unsustainable consumption patterns, and inadequate public service provision.



Co-production plays a crucial role in improving resource efficiency by encouraging shared responsibility in resource management and promoting long-term behavioral changes that support responsible resource use (Ostrom, 1990; 2010).

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Promoting equity and inclusivity

- ▶ One of the core principles of sustainable development is ensuring that all members of society, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, have a voice in decision-making processes.



Co-production provides a mechanism for addressing these disparities by creating participatory spaces where diverse voices can be heard (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013).

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

fostering innovation and resilience

- ▶ Many sustainability challenges require novel solutions that go beyond conventional policy approaches.



Co-production contributes to the economic dimension of sustainable development by fostering innovation and resilience by bringing together different, which facilitates knowledge exchange, and innovation (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013, Voorberg et al., 2015).

Co-Production as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Challenges of Co-Production in Sustainability

- ▶ **Institutional resistance to power-sharing.**
- ▶ **Coordination difficulties among stakeholders.**
- ▶ **Risk of tokenistic participation rather than meaningful engagement.**

4. Conclusion

Conclusion

- ▶ Achieving sustainable development requires governance models that integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives.
- ▶ Co-production offers a promising approach to advancing sustainable development by fostering inclusive, efficient, and adaptive governance.
- ▶ However, the effectiveness of co-production depends on key conditions that policymakers must consider. Institutional support, stakeholder commitment, and well-structured participatory mechanisms are essential for ensuring meaningful citizen engagement.

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