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Leading co-production
- building a conceptual framework

This paper presents work in progress. Feedback and suggestions are very welcome.

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Abstract
The paper sets out to explore leadership interventions in co-production processes, an element that has not been given much attention in research. The claim is that a deeper understanding of co-production processes can be gained from analyzing these initiatives in a context of governance by exploring the leadership interventions enacted by public bodies which shape and condition co-production processes.

The paper argues that it is important to capture both the ‘contextual’ and ‘facilitative’ dimensions of leadership. To this end an analytical framework for analyzing leadership of co-production processes is developed by synthesizing three theoretical perspectives on collaborative leadership, i.e. meta-governance, network management and leadership across organizations. An illustrative case study is carried out applying the framework to explore leadership interventions enacted in a case of co-governance in the Danish Municipality of Holbæk. The analysis points to the significance of hands-off leadership in co-production processes and reveals dynamics of leadership which deserve further exploration.

Introduction
Just like in many other European countries (OECD, 2011) co-production of welfare services is currently high on the strategic agenda of Danish municipalities. As a response to budget cuts and raising welfare expectations among citizens, a range of co-production initiatives are launched in Danish municipalities aiming at collaboration with local communities and civil society on developing, designing and producing welfare services. These initiatives are framed by the municipalities in terms of different ‘bottom lines’, i.e. effectiveness, democratization/empowerment and welfare innovation.

Research shows that high expectations are linked to the potentials of co-production (Mayer, Edelenbos, & Monnikhof, 2005; William Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2013a). Some – primarily decision makers – stress the potential for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector through co-production (Barker, 2010; Durose, Mangan, Needham, Rees, & Hilton, 2013). While others stress the potentials of co-production in strengthening citizen participation, enhancing innovation of public services and creating public value (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Pestoff, Brandsen, & Verschuere, 2012; Pestoff, 2009). In line with Pestoff et al. (2012, p. xvii) I will understand co-production as “a core element in new public governance” and explore the challenges and possibilities inherent in leading co-production from a governance perspective.

The majority of research in the field of co-production is following a relatively narrow course, primarily focuses on three strings (Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012): Motives for co-production, the organizational perequisites for effective co-production and the possible effects of co-production. Not much attention has been given to the governance/leadership perspective in terms of the way these processes are governed, designed and facilitated. Recently, though, there have been calls (Meijer, 2014; Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012) to bring in alternative theoretical frameworks to compete with the dominant economic understanding, e.g. by relating the concept to “broader theories about the division of power and authority in the public domain” (Meijer, 2014, p. 2).
In line with this, I suggest to analyze co-production initiatives from a broader point of view by exploring co-production initiatives in the context of New Public Governance (Osborne, 2010). My claim is that a deeper understanding of co-production processes can be gained from analyzing these initiatives in a context of governance by exploring leadership interventions enacted by public bodies which shape and condition co-production processes. The objective of the paper is to contribute theoretically to the understanding of leadership interventions in co-production processes and to generate new insights into the challenges and possibilities facing leaders in co-production processes.

Looking at co-production processes through a governance lens points attention to the leadership challenges and possibilities inherent in co-production processes. In line with other types of interactive governance processes (Torfing, Jacob, B. Guy Peters, 2012), co-production processes challenge the power relations and offer new roles to the actors involved (Bovaird, 2007; Boyle, Coote, Sherwood, & Slay, 2010; Durose, Justice, & Skelcher, 2013; Löffler, 2009). F. inst. Bovaird (2007, p. 856) points to the fact that: “Coproduction almost always means a redistribution of power among stakeholders. The very process of moving to greater coproduction is necessarily highly political and calls into question the balance of representative democracy, participative democracy and professional expertise.

Current research underlines the significant role of leadership in supporting interactive governance processes. A range of leadership interventions are needed to support the actors in understanding their interdependence, building trust, reframing the issue and ultimately taking new roles in solving common problems (Ansell & Gash, 2007; de Jongh, 2013; Keast & Mandell, 2014; Klijn, Steijn, & Edelenbos, 2010; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004). In principle, leadership interventions can be enacted by a range of different participants. I will, however, focus only on the leadership interventions enacted by the public bodies, i.e. the municipality. Empirically, public bodies tend to dominate in collaborative governance processes (Agranoff, 2006). Researchers reviewing a broad range of international empirical co-production initiatives (William Voorberg et al., 2013a) point to the fact, that public agencies often take the role as initiator. The same is shown to be the case in a range of Danish collaborative innovation projects (Aagaard, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2014a). It therefore seems highly relevant to explore the leadership interventions enacted by the municipality as ‘key leader’ (Ansell & Gash, 2012) in co-production processes. Consequently, the paper aims at answering the following question:

**Which leadership interventions are enacted by the municipality in co-production processes?**

In line with definition of leadership applied by Huxham & Vangen (2014, p. 63), I define leadership interventions as: Interventions by the municipality intended ‘to make things happen’ in the co-production process.

The purpose of this paper, thus, is to explore the leadership interventions enacted by public bodies in co-production initiatives. To this end, I will develop a theoretical framework for analyzing public leadership of co-production processes, drawing on three different bodies of theory that I find relevant in this task. Subsequently, I will apply this theoretical framework to a selected empirical
case of co-production in a Danish municipality, analyzing and discussing the empirical leadership challenges and possibilities of co-production processes.

The paper is divided into four main parts. In the first part, I present a range of theoretical perspectives on leadership of co-production. In the second part, I set out to develop a theoretical framework for analyzing public leadership interventions in co-production processes. A multidimensional theoretical framework is developed by synthesizing three different theoretical perspectives on governance and leadership of collaborative processes i.e. meta-governance, network management and leadership across organizations.

In the third part of the paper, the framework is applied to an empirical case of co-production, i.e. the case of a Danish Municipality, Holbæk. I conduct a theory-driven analysis of the case of co-governance to explore and illustrate the insights springing from the analysis of leading co-production. In the fourth and final part, I discuss the findings and draw some conclusions concerning the insights generated by the analysis.

**Leading co-production – theoretical perspectives**

**Co-production – the concept and its roots**

The concept of co-production is currently high on the agenda of public decision makers and has in recent years been given increasing attention in research. A range of different labels (William Voorberg et al., 2013a) such as ‘social innovation’, ‘co-creation’ and ‘co-production’, are used to describe processes of public bodies involving users/civil society in the design, development and production of welfare services.

However, the concept of co-production is contested among researches (Taco Brandsen & Marlies Honingh, 2014) and described as ‘vague’ and ‘ambiguous’ (Durose, Justice, et al., 2013; Needham, 2008; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013) Also, the concept is said to have achieved the status of a ‘magic concept’ (William Voorberg et al., 2013a, p. 3) "which during the last years have been embraced as new modernization or reform strategies for the public sector".

In a systematic review Voorberg et al. (2013) point to the following current definition of co-production: "the active involvement of citizens in public service delivery by creating sustainable partnerships with citizens" (Voorberg et al., 2013, p. 2-3). Even if there are variations in the way, co-production is defined, the following elements are present in the main part of the research in this field: (Löffler, 2009; William Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2013b, p. 15 ff):

- Active involvement of citizens in public service delivery
- Sharing of resources, particularly in relation to co-production of knowledge
- To achieve public value and a rearrangement of relationship between government and citizens into a more horizontal partnership

This understanding of co-production will be applied in this paper, particularly stressing the following
three elements as important features of co-production processes:
- Collaboration between public bodies and citizens
- Sharing of knowledge
- Rearrangement of roles and relations

This approach to co-production differs from the original concept of co-production launched by Orstrom et al. in the 80’s (Parks et al., 1981). The original concept was based on an economic understanding of co-production and focused exclusively on collaboration between public employees and the users of welfare services on the output side. The approach in this paper corresponds with more recent research in the field of co-production focusing on the democratic potentials and pitfalls of co-production processes (Bovaird, 2007; Durose, Justice, et al., 2013; Jetté & Vaillancourt, 2010; Pestoff et al., 2012; Pestoff, 2009). In line with Pestoff et al. (Jetté & Vaillancourt, 2010; Pestoff et al., 2012) I will employ a broad concept of co-production involving individual citizens/service users as well as civil organizations and local communities and concerning the out-put as well as the input side of the policy process. I will draw on a multilevel understanding of co-production developed by Pestoff et al. (2012, p. 17) distinguishing between: Co-governance, co-management and co-production.

Co-production as collaborative governance

In this paper, I choose to understand current co-production initiatives in Denmark and other countries as an element of a shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ taking place in modern societies. A development, which has fundamentally changed the role of the state from governing through direct forms of control towards governing through collaboration with a wide range of actors outside the state (Rhodes, 1996).

The development from government to governance has been theorized and described by a multiplicity of researchers. Osborne (2010) distinguish between three governance paradigms, i.e. Public Administration (PA), New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG). According to Osborne, NPG "posits both a plural state, where multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public service, and a pluralist state, where multiple processes inform the policy-making system" (Osborne, 2010, p. 9). The type of governance processes unfolding in the NPG has been elaborated by many different researchers as f. inst. ‘interactive governance’ (Torfing, Jacob, B. Guy Peters, 2012), ‘network governance’ (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004) or ‘collaborative governance’ (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Common for these concepts is the notion that the state no longer monopolizes societal governance in the way it used to do, but must rely upon, and cooperate with, other actors, organizations and powers in order to get things done (J. Torfing, 2006, p. 4).

The original conceptualization by Rhodes (1996, p. 695) of networks “as an alternative to, not a hybrid of, markets and hierarchies” has been challenged by later research pointing out, that network governance seldom exists in a pure form, but rather in hybrid forms of governance that are mixed up with traditional hierarchical forms of governance. In other words, network governance takes place ‘in the shadow of hierarchy’ (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004; J. Torfing & Triantafillou, 2011; Aagaard, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2014b).
Leading co-production

During later years a range of new theoretical perspectives on leadership have developed which are in line with the governance paradigm described above. These perspectives understand the leadership task as ‘supporting self-governing systems across organizations’ and share a common understanding of leadership which contradicts the traditional understanding in a number of ways (Morse & Buss, 2007; Raffel, Leisink, & Middlebrooks, 2009; Van Wart, 2013) by seeing leadership as a process rather than a person, understanding leadership as enacted not only within but also between organizations and demanding that leadership should create ‘public value’.

So how can we understand the concepts of governing and leading respectively? The two concepts stem from different theories that seek to understand recent empirical developments in the public sector (Greve, 2001). Theories, that operate on different levels and focus on different objects of investigation (Sørensen & Triantafillou, 2009). The leadership perspective is a micro level perspective, focusing on the acts of individual (or groups of) leaders and how they influence the actions of the participants. Whereas the governance perspective is a meso-level perspective looking at the ways governance is enacted through design and framing of interactions, and focusing on the institutionalization of relations between actors. To understand how leadership of co-production processes is practiced, I will be drawing on theoretical perspectives from both the meso-level (governance) and the micro-level (leadership).

My claim is, that leadership interventions in co-production processes consist of both a ‘contextual’ and a ‘facilitative’ dimension. Huxham and Vangen (2000, pp. 1168–69) define ‘contextual leadership by’ pointing to three media of leadership in collaborative settings, i.e. structure, processes and participants and argue that “these three media are to a large extent, normally outside the control of the members of a collaboration. These media may therefore be thought of all providing ‘contextual leadership’”. I have selected three theoretical perspectives on leadership/governance that I expect will enable me to analyze both dimensions of leadership. I.e. ‘the contextual’ leadership dimension, which is often in practice enacted by the policy-makers and top civil servants, and the ‘facilitative’ leadership dimension of co-production processes which is in practice often carried out by selected civil servants that are given the role of facilitating collaboration processes.

A framework for analyzing leadership of co-production

I will argue that our understanding of co-production processes can be informed by drawing on existing research on the leadership of collaborative governance processes. In the following I will construct a framework for analyzing the leadership of co-production processes by combining selected perspectives from governance and leadership theories. In the following I will present the three perspectives, ending each section by highlighting the contributions of this perspective to the framework. The three perspectives are:

- A meta-governance perspective
- A network management perspective
- An organizational perspective: Leading across organizations
The meta-governance perspective

In the meta-governance perspective the main focus is on the ‘contextual’ dimension of leadership - and thus on the role of policy-makers and top civil servants. Leadership is understood as “governance of governance, as it involves deliberate attempts to facilitate, manage and direct more or less self-regulating processes of interactive governance without reverting to traditional statist styles of government in terms of bureaucratic rulemaking and imperative command” (Torfing, Jacob, B. Guy Peters, 2012, p. 34). Public actors (administrators and politicians) are ‘naturally born meta-governors’ (Torfing, Jacob, B. Guy Peters, 2012, p. 133 ff) and for politicians the role of meta-governor seen is a possibility to regain a role as leader of the governance processes.

According to Sørensen & Torfing (2009, p. 244) an important task for meta-governance is to ensure effectiveness as well as democracy and transparency in governance networks. Drawing on a post-liberal understanding of democracy, they suggest an evaluation of the networks’ democratic anchorage: “in a nutshell, the argument is that government networks are democratic in so far as they are democratically anchored in representative democracy, organizational democracy, a democratic public and a set of democratic norms and rules.”

Sørensen & Torfing (2009) distinguish between two different types of meta-governance, i.e. hands-off- and hands-on meta-governance. Hands-off governance unfolds at a distance through leadership interventions such as designing the network (inclusion/exclusion of participants and formulation of objectives, procedures and deadlines) and framing the network: Deciding the conditions in terms of e.g. political mandate, political framing and storytelling. While hands-on meta-governance is enacted through direct intervention in the processes of the network through management and participation aimed at facilitating the processes of the network to ensure open and responsive deliberation.

Meta-governors are facing a range of dilemmas and potential difficulties (tension) in the meta-governance of networks (Provan & Kenis, 2007, p. 242 ff; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009; Torfing, Jacob, B. Guy Peters, 2012). The most important of which are: To secure democratic legitimacy in a balance between classic territorial representation and new forms of stakeholder democracy – i.e. the linking of democratic arenas. Another important task is to secure the right balance between democracy/inclusiveness and efficiency. In many cases there is a trade-off between the two (Börzel & Panke, 2007; Provan & Kenis, 2007, p. 242).

According to Sørensen & Torfing (2009, p. 252) the role as meta-governor contains a range of pitfalls – one of which is to give too much attention to short term perspectives: “public meta-governors might grant priority to short-term interests in advancing their own agendas and policy solutions through an instrumental co-optation of the stakeholders and a strategic manipulation of the networked policy process.”

Summing up, in my view the meta-governance perspective contributes with a range of important elements to the analysis of leadership, i.e.:

- The democratic perspective: Inclusion/exclusion of stakeholders
- Design and framing of the network: Goals and conditions
- Storytelling as a hands-off meta-governance tool
- The role of politicians as meta-governors and the linking of traditional and new democratic arenas

**The network management perspective**

The network management perspective is preoccupied with finding ways to organize and manage governance networks so that they can work effectively. This perspective focuses on the ‘contextual’ as well as the ‘facilitative’ dimension of leadership. Klijn et al. (2010, p. 1064) define governance networks as: “public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors”. These networks emerge as result of increasing complexity and uncertainty, where societal problems and challenges exceed the boundaries of single organizations and requires cooperation across actors and organizations. According to Koppenjan & Klijn (2004, p. 11) “Since cooperation and learning behavior do not emerge spontaneously, it is necessary to support interaction around complex issues in network settings. We refer to strategies, which are meant to further these interactions as network management”.

Klijn et al. see the main leadership task in networks as coping with the insecurity and enhancing mutual learning processes among the network actors. Mandell & Keast (2009), however, take a slightly different stand when it comes to the main leadership task in network management. They distinguish between three different types of networks that need different forms of leadership, i.e. cooperative, coordinative and collaborative networks. Collaborative networks, which they also label ‘transformative networks’ are characterized by a high degree of mutual dependency. In this type of networks, the leadership task is different: “Collaborative networks are centered on changing the way people are accustomed to working in their individual organizations... The focus is... not primarily about how to work more efficiently with others, but instead how to build new types of relationships among the participants to change their behavior” (M. P. Mandell & Keast, 2009, pp. 165–166).

A range of different leadership interventions are recommended by this perspective. Klijn et al. (Klijn & Edelenbos, 2007) argue for two different kinds of leadership interventions in network management, i.e. **process design and process management** on the one hand and **institutional design** on the other hand. Institutional design is a hands-off strategy for leading through structuring, organizing and setting rules for the network, while process design and management are hands-on strategies.

Ansell & Gash (2012) and Mandell & Keast (2014; 2009) represent a ‘side string’ of network management which primarily focuses on hands-on leadership interventions. Ansell & Gashs label this kind of leadership ‘facilitative leadership’, which they describe as: “create the conditions that support the contributions of stakeholders to the collaborative process and effective transactions among them” (2012, p. 18). They suggest three aspects as the role of ‘facilitative leader’, i.e. the roles as respectively steward, mediator and catalyst. Mandell & Keast (2009, p. 174) argue for a new understanding of leadership in collaborative networks and advance the concept of ‘process catalyst’
as describing the leadership interventions that are necessary in collaborative networks including the following interventions: Building network relations and climate, developing sustainability and commitment and focusing on the process.

An important challenge in network management is to deal with the institutional tensions that are bound to arise between on the one hand the logic of the network collaboration and on the other hand institutional logics of hierarchy and the traditional representative institutions, as networks operate in a ‘hybrid democracy’ (Edelenbos, Van Buuren, & Klijn, 2013; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2013). Another challenge in network management is to ensure, that network participants experience mutual learning processes and co-produce knowledge. This is seen as a condition for building capacity for common problem solving (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004), but has proved difficult in practice (Edelenbos et al., 2013).

To sum up, the network management perspective underlines the following important elements in the leadership of collaborative processes, i.e.:

- The risk of institutional tensions between networks and hierarchy in terms of ‘hybrid democracy and governance’
- The importance of building trust and relations among participants
- Building capacity for common problem solving: Supporting mutual learning processes and co-production of knowledge

The organizational perspective: Leading across organizations

This perspective sees leadership as “the mechanisms that lead a collaboration’s policy and activity agenda in on direction rather than the other” (Chris Huxham & Vangen, 2000, p. 341). The focus is primarily on the ‘facilitative’ dimension of leadership interventions. This perspective observes traditional boundaries between organizations breaking down and accordingly identifies a need to take leadership across organizational boundaries. Within this perspective I have chosen to focus primarily on the empirically rooted research of Huxham & Vangen that advances the concepts of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia.

The concept of ‘collaborative advantage’ is a key concept in the research of Huxham & Vangen and is the opposite of the concept ‘collaborative inertia’, which is what the researchers observe often happens in collaborative processes (C Huxham, 2000, p. 352) “that the output from collaborative arrangements often appears to be negligible or the rate of output to be extremely slow”. Leadership, therefore, is about ensuring the efficiency of collaborative processes by minimizing the ‘collaborative inertia’ in collaborations, which in practice often suffer from high transaction costs and from difficulties in enhancing participation and empowerment, solving conflicts and diminishing competition among participants. The central leadership task is to cope with complexity and to lead diversity among the participants, which they identify in three different forms, i.e.: Resources and goals, language, values and culture and power and autonomy.

Huxham & Vangen focus only on hands-on types of leadership interventions. They see leadership of
collaborative processes as being enacted through three different media: Structure, process and participants. Crosby & Bryson, who have also contributed to this perspective, give great significance to the integrative dimension of leadership, by Page (2010, p. 247) called ‘sense-giving leadership’. In this understanding the most important leadership task is to build links between the participants’ different world views and interests and integrate their view of the challenges they are working with and the range of possible solutions. Crosby & Bryson (2005, p. 191) underline the importance of visionary leadership, which consists in framing the collaborative task in a meaningful way, that can guide collective action: “the way that at need is framed – that is how it is named, explained and interpreted, has tremendous impact on who will be concerned about that need, what kinds of remedies will be considered and the membership of a coalition that might be formed to advocate adoption of these remedies”.

Researchers advancing the ‘integrative’ approach call for leadership interventions aimed at consensus building and developing common understandings. Ospina & Foldy (2010, p. 297 ff) describes five leadership interventions that are particularly suited to this task. Here, I will specifically underline two, firstly, the effort of creating so called ‘cognitive shifts’ in the metal images of the participants through framing and reframing of the task/challenge of the collaboration and the possible solutions so as to reach a common understanding (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; Innes & Booher, 1999; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Page, 2010). Another important task is to ‘engaging dialogue about difference’ as research shows that “surfacing conflicting interests, goals and activities, is, paradoxically, essential to the long-term goal of a common vision and a shared agenda” (Ospina & Foldy, 2010, p. 299).

Huxham & Vangen point to a range of paradoxes, complexities and ambiguities in collaborative processes that pose challenges to collaborative leadership. They point to important tensions between common wisdom and practical reality in the leadership practices. And to structural complexities and paradoxes that must be handled by collaborative leadership. Also, they see the time dimension as a challenge in collaborative leadership. The research of Huxham & Vangen underline the fact, that collaboration requires a lot of time, as it takes time to build trust and to handle accountability issues and other organizational priorities (Chris Huxham, 1996). They estimate that building a collaborative trust relation in which a positive spiral of collaboration can be initiated, takes a couple of years. And they foresee that the need for a long span of time is challenged by the timespans in public governance: “two years is a long time in governmental policy cycles and new initiatives are often being introduced before previous ones have become embedded…”(C Huxham, 2000, p. p 352)

The main message of Huxham & Vangen is that collaborative initiatives are resource demanding and only rarely successful. They conclude that (C Huxham, 2000, p. 1171): “carrying any of the leadership activities through to completion requires a very large amount of resources in the form of energy, commitment, skill and continual nurturing on the part of the leader.

All in all, the organizational perspective contributes with the following elements to the analysis of collaborative leadership:
- Collaborative inertia as a condition for collaborative leadership
- Sense-giving leadership: Unfolding diversity of interests/perspectives and developing common understanding through framing and re-framing
- Importance of the time dimension

The three perspectives each contribute with insights into the challenges of collaborative leadership and recommended leadership interventions. This table summarizes the main points made by the three different perspectives concerning the purpose of leadership, the main leadership tasks and interventions as well as the challenges and dilemmas inherent in conducting leadership. Also, the table summarizes the contributions of the three perspectives to the framework for analyzing leadership of co-production.

Table 1: Three leadership perspectives: Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of leadership</th>
<th>Meta-governance</th>
<th>Network management</th>
<th>Leading across organizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governing governance</td>
<td>Managing network collaboration</td>
<td>Achieving collaborative advantage</td>
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<tr>
<th>Main leadership task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure efficiency and democracy in network governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support interaction in complex settings to ensure efficient collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cope with diversity and complexity</td>
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<td>Build links between world views</td>
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<tr>
<th>Leadership interventions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands-off and hands-on meta-governance: Design, framing, management, participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional design Network design, Network management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process catalyst: Building relations and processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combining facilitative and directive leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense-giving leadership: Framing and re-framing</td>
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<th>Challenges /dilemmas</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trade-offs/tensions between democracy and efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>The risk of metagovernance being too tight or too slack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional tensions, hybrid governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual learning and co-production of knowledge</td>
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<td>Structural complexity and ambiguity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paradoxes of goals and cultures. Coping with diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of time dimension</td>
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</table>
A framework for analyzing leadership of co-production

This section presents and discusses an analytical framework for exploring leadership of co-production drawing on the three theoretical perspectives unfolded in the previous section. My point is that by merging the three perspectives it is possible to cover both the ‘contextual’ (governance) dimension and the ‘facilitative’ (leadership) dimension of the leadership interventions. The meta-governance perspective most explicitly works with both these dimensions. Therefore, I will build the framework on hands-off/hands-on meta-governance conceptualization, distinguishing between leadership interventions aimed at designing and framing the collaboration (hands-off) and interventions aimed at facilitating the collaboration (hands-on).

The contributions from the three perspectives have been selected according to theoretical as well as empirical considerations. The framework has been developed through a process of abduction/retransition (Glynos, J. & Howarth, 2007), alternating between the analysis of empirical data and a theoretical focus. This is the reason, for instance, why the dimension of storytelling has been given a significant status in the framework – as the empirical data points to storytelling as an important leadership intervention.

Working with the theories, I have specifically selected criteria of analysis that correspond to the factors which constitute co-production, i.e.:

- Collaboration between public bodies and citizens: The questions of selection and inclusion of participants and the role of politicians will help uncover the degree to which leadership interventions support collaboration between public bodies and citizens.

- The sharing of knowledge: This factor is analyzed by looking specifically at the degree to which mutual learning processes and co-production of knowledge is supported through leadership interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution to framework</th>
<th>Inclusion/selection of participants</th>
<th>Institutional tensions, hybrid governance</th>
<th>Collaborative inertia as a condition of collaboration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design and framing of the network</td>
<td>Building trust and relations</td>
<td>Building capacity for common problem solving: Mutual learning processes and co-production of knowledge</td>
<td>Sense-giving leadership: Unfolding diversity of interests and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop common understanding through framing and re-framing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linking traditional and new democratic arenas and the role of politicians</td>
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<td>Importance of the time dimension</td>
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</table>
A re-arrangement of the roles and relations: This factor concerns relational aspects of co-production processes and will be analyzed by looking at relations-building and sense-making leadership interventions.

The table presenting the framework is constructed as follows: The first column describes the two central leadership tasks in co-production processes. The second column depicts the expected leadership interventions and the third column operationalizes the leadership interventions in the form of questions to be answered in each case of co-production. The operationalization does not cover all of the theoretical elements derived from the three perspectives, as certain elements operate on a more abstract level, e.g. institutional tensions, collaborative inertia as a condition and the time dimension. These elements will be discussed as part of the analysis.

Table 2: A framework for analyzing leadership of co-production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership task</th>
<th>Leadership intervention</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hands-off meta-governance:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure legitimacy, anchoring and</td>
<td>Inclusion/selection of participants</td>
<td>Who is invited? How are participants selected? Who participates? Internal anchoring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficiency</td>
<td>Setting the goals and frames for the co-production process</td>
<td>What are the objectives and frames of the process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>How is the project described and articulated – internally and externally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linking democratic arenas and the role of politicians</td>
<td>How is the link between democratic arenas designed?</td>
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Building capacity for common problem solving: Support mutual learning and co-production of knowledge

How are mutual learning processes supported? To which extent is knowledge co-produced?

The case of Holbæk i Fællesskab

The aim here is to present the selected case of co-production which originates from the Danish Municipality of Holbæk. The initiative, Holbæk i Fællesskab, is framed by the municipality as an initiative of co-governance. Contrary to the levels of co-production and co-management, which take place at the output or implementation side of the political system, the co-governance type of co-production (Pestoff et al., 2012, p. 17) “is usually found on the input side and involves the third sector and other private actors in the determination of public policy for a given sector”.

The case of Holbæk i Fællesskab is one of three cases included in my PhD project and has been selected as an illustrative case for analyzing leadership of co-production for two reasons: Firstly, the case of Holbæk is well suited for analyzing leadership of co-production, as it is characterized by complex leadership interventions, enacted by three different leadership levels, i.e. the policy makers, the directors/top civil servants and selected civil servants organizing and facilitating the process.

Secondly, it is seen as a critical case in the specific form of a ‘most likely case’, which is particularly suitable for falsifying theories (Flyvbjerg, 2009; Gerring, 2007). The Municipality of Holbæk has during many years been working to develop local democratic institutions and experimenting with new ways of involving citizens and stakeholders. The co-governance initiative of Holbæk i Fællesskab, thus, is built on years of experience with involvement and collaboration. I consider it an ambitious case in terms of the time and resources invested on part of the municipality and in terms of organizing. As such I expect this case to reveal challenges of leading co-production that are likely to be present also in other, less ambitious and complex cases of co-production.

The context

The Municipality of Holbæk is a medium sized municipality with 2-3 main towns and a number of small, rural communities. The municipality has a long tradition of focusing on local democracy and has developed an ambitious model of deliberative local arenas (lokalfora), which has been practiced for the last 8-years. The idea of ‘Holbæk I Fællesskab’ is to renew the democratic involvement of citizens and other stakeholders by creating thematic rather than locally defined temporary democratic arenas. Furthermore, the municipality is currently – like the majority of Danish municipalities - in a situation of economic pressure. In the budget of the years 2015-18 the municipality must, according to calculations of the civil servants, save approximately 80 mill DKK. This is the economic background for the initiative ‘Holbæk i Fællesskab’.
Holbæk i Fællesskab

In the summer of 2013, the city council of Holbæk launched a new municipal strategy for enhancing the local democracy, ‘Holbæk i Fællesskab’ (Together in Holbæk). The city council formulated a new paradigm of “experimenting with new ways of collaborating with citizens, users and private companies about innovation and development” (Politisk Aftale: Holbæk i Fællesskab). The vision is to strengthen the role of politicians as policy makers and to find new ways of involving citizens and other stakeholders that are not primarily rooted in the local areas.

The case explored in this paper is a co-governance process initiated by the Municipality of Holbæk in the spring of 2014 as part of ‘Holbæk i Fællesskab’. Four groups labelled ‘omstillingsgrupper’ (change groups here labelled o-groups, were established by the municipality and set to work in the spring and summer of 2014. The idea was to invite all stakeholders to co-produce innovative solutions to specific challenges. I studied one of the four groups, the o-group working with ‘learning and well-being’ in kindergartens and schools (children 0-18 years of age), consisting of approx. 25 members selected and invited by the municipality: Parents, politicians, front line workers and leaders from municipal kindergartens and schools and representatives of organizations in the field of children and youth. The co-governance initiative was launched as a new way of involving parents and other stakeholders specifically in the development in the sector of public schools. The Municipality of Holbæk contains a number of smaller public schools in the rural areas. In recent years, the city council has several times implemented re-structuring and closing-down of schools. These processes were described by parents as well as civil servants and politicians as “not very elegant” and as not contributing to build trust among local citizens and the municipality.

The set-up of the groups was ambition and resource consuming: A project organization was established within the municipality, a central actor being the project group consisting of employees from the municipality with the responsibility of designing and facilitating the meetings of the o-group including data preparation and communication.

The o-group held four meetings in the period of March-June 2014. In some of the meetings extended group of participants attended, including all members of the parent councils from schools and kindergartens. In August 2014, the members of the o-group were invited to a so-called ‘budget-camp’ of the city council to deliver the results of their work. The process of the o-group resulted in a ‘delivery’ to the city council which took the form of budget savings summing up to DKK 6 million and some recommendations in the field of children and youth.

Data collection and method

My study is an explorative case study of the o-group "Learning and well-being among children and young people". I have observed the work of the group over a period of five months attending the meetings and collecting three different kinds of data: Policy documents, participant observation and in depth interviews with selected participants from the different stakeholder groups, 18 in total. The interview and observation data has been elaborated into ‘thick descriptions’ and analyzed thematically.
Analysis: Leadership of Holbæk i Fællesskab

In the following I will apply the conceptual frame for analyzing leadership interventions in my selected case, Holbæk i Fællesskab. The case is used as an illustration of the insights on co-production processes that can be obtained by analyzing the leadership dimension of co-production.

Hands-off leadership interventions:
Generally, the hands-off leadership in this case was enacted primarily by the top civil servants in Holbæk Kommune, i.e. the directors and the top administrators of the municipal department of Children and Youth. Notably, the role of the politicians was restricted.

Selection and inclusion of participants
The o-group consisted of approx. 25 participants that were hand-picked by the municipality and received a personal invitation. The mayor of Holbæk was heading the initiative, signing the invitations and introducing the kick-off meeting and other important meetings. The selection of participants was described as based on ’systems thinking’, i.e. “to include all groups of actors with an interest in or knowledge about the working theme of the group” (notat 19.12.13, p 7). In practice, participants were selected in line with a ‘representative, consultative’ logic: Participants in the stakeholder groups of parents and employees and pupils were selected among representatives in the existing democratic institutions of the schools and institutions, i.e. the MED and parent-councils of the schools and kindergartens and other existing consultative organs such as Holbæk Youth city council and the Council of Disabled. Furthermore, the municipality initiated reach out activities, e.g. inviting a broader group of school council members to some of the meetings and establishing a “task force” to visit institutions and gather further inputs.

The responsible civil servants were aware of the issue of diversity in the group. Intentions were aired by the civil servants to introduce ‘creativity’ and ‘disturbance’ in the group by including ‘different’ participants, e.g. the leader of the local youth theater. In the first meeting of the group, a meta-discussion was facilitated about the composition of the group (notes, 1. meeting). Some participants expressed wishes of greater diversity in the group, but most of the ideas were rejected by the facilitator. In practice no changes were made to the core group. And all in all, the meetings of the group turned out to be dominated by employees and leaders from the municipal institutions. Only very few young people attended the meetings.

Setting the goals, process design and deadlines
The formulation of objectives, procedures etc. of the o-group was almost exclusively in the hands of the top civil servants of the Municipality of Holbæk. The political basis was laid out in the form of the political agreement ‘Holbæk i Fællesskab’ in the summer of 2013 stating the intention of the politicians to initiate”...open, innovative processes, where citizens and other stakeholders participate early in the process in – in collaboration with the city council – defining challenges and developing good solutions to them” (notat 19.12.13, p 1).
In a document (notat) from December 2013 the responsible top civil servants made a clear and detailed hands-off leadership intervention in the process. In the words of Newman et al (2004) one might say, that this policy paper shaped the ‘political opportunity structure’ by defining the kind of questions put to the stakeholders. This document framed the o-group process both in terms of process and content by laying out a description of the background, the current challenges and the task of the group, at the same time stating the objective of the group, and the roles of politicians and civil servants, including a detailed time plan for the meetings and the deadline for ‘delivering’ an output. The description of the process seems to be written from a traditional, linear logic including a tight time-plan, not giving much attention to the special requirements of collaborative processes and the phenomenon of collaborative inertia. The time dimension in terms of deadlines can be an important way to influence collaborative processes (Barnes, Skelcher, Beirens, & Dalziel, 2008; Newman et al., 2004) posing a pressure to ‘deliver’ within a certain time-frame. The pressure of the time-frame was commented on by a number of participants from all stakeholder groups (source: interviews...).

The task of the o-group was framed by the municipality as part of the ‘budget challenge’ and placed within an ‘austerity’ discourse: The task of the group was to develop new ideas on how to save 22 mill DKK in the area of childrens’ institutions and schools over the next years (Omtillingstemaer til Budget 2015-18). Competing objectives of the o-groups are mentioned in the policy documents, one aimed at producing a tangible result (output), the other aimed at developing a new type of process and relations (outcome). The two different types of objectives are described as follows:

Output: “To produce a final output consisting of one or more possible scenarios/models for the City Council to be used in the Budget 2015-18 ” (notat 19.12.13)

Outcome: “...to create the frames of a constructive collaboration on preparing economic prioritizing between politicians, citizens, companies and other external stakeholders..... and strengthening the political leadership” (Notat 19.12.13, p 1-2)

By designing the process and framing the challenge, task and objectives of the o-group, the municipality enacted a directive and hierarchical type of leadership intervention in the process and formulated contradictory objectives.

**Storytelling**

An important element in the process of the o-group was the storytelling activities by the Municipality of Holbæk, e.g. communicating the story of ‘Holbæk i Fællesskab’ as part of an ambitious project of developing local democracy. This story was communicated externally through the municipal website and through press releases, films on You Tube, Facebook postings etc.– and internally through the intranet of the municipality etc.

Vis a vis the participants of the o-group, the story of Holbæk aiming at "a new way of acting as a municipality" was established by the Mayor of Holbæk, Søren Kjærgaard. One example is his introductory speech at the kick off meeting for the o-groups: "Holbæk i Fællesskab must bring something bigger than just bottom line – it will contribute to changing the way we work as a
municipality...If we could develop new and better solutions together – this is about perceiving the municipality in a new role, a role of solving challenges with and for the citizens. We will be activating resources in new ways. This is all about a new way of being a citizen, a way, where more people contribute and take responsibility” (SK, 1. meeting 13.3.2014).

The o-groups were described and articulated by the Municipality of Holbæk in terms of co-production and the work of the o-groups were framed as a collaborative innovation initiative (notat, 19.12.13) posing an organizational learning opportunity, particularly for politicians, who also participated in the ‘Exploratorium of Democracy’. The storytelling activities linked to the o-group all seem to be part of an ambition nourished by the Municipality of Holbæk to brand itself as progressive in terms of democracy development and co-production. According to (Voorberg et al., 2013a, p 21-22) using the notion of co-production in “a symbolic process to achieve legitimacy” is a common feature.

The linking of democratic arenas and the role of politicians

The four o-groups were framed by the municipality as ‘political’ and as a consultative process. It was underlined in the policy documents that the role of the o-groups was to deliver “one or more possible scenarios/models to the city council, which the city council can use in the budget 2015-18, but is not committed to use” (Notat, 19.12.2013) granting the city council the ultimate power of decision.

Through the institutional design the Municipality of Holbæk sought to link the collaborative arena of co-production with the traditional institutional arena of decision-making by using the politicians as ‘linking agents’. As mentioned, the mayor of Holbæk, Søren Kjærsgaard, took an important role in the process. Also, the chairmen from each of the relevant political committees were placed in the role of heading the o-groups. And finally, all members of the relevant political committee were invited to participate in the o-groups together with 1-2 selected members from the “Democracy Exploratorium”. The ambition was to include 5-7 politicians in each of the o-groups.

The role of the politicians and the link to the representative arena of decisions has clearly been thought through ‘on paper’ (notat dec. 2013) and the process designed to make the politicians play a proactive role in the work of the groups. But in reality the role of the politicians was perceived as unclear – by the politicians themselves and by other participants. One indication of this is the fact that less than half of the invited politicians in fact attended the meetings in the o-group. The politicians did not feel confident and ready to perform in a new and different arena. One of them expresses the frustration in following way: “Which mandate am I sitting on?” (Interview: Emrah, politician).

This role insecurity among the politicians is also addressed by the mayor of Holbæk: “Some of them seem to cling to the traditional role as politician expressing their own view of things. They put their views forward, when suggestions come up. And that inhibits the dialogue – because then the politicians set the direction of the o-groups –and that was never thought to be” (Interview, Mayor,
Søren Kjærgaard). One of the civil servants acting as facilitator reflected on the deeper institutional reason for the difficult role of the politicians. She was relatively new to the organization and wondered why the politicians did not in reality get at central role in the process: "I feel like involving the politicians more. It is easy to hear from the way, the politicians talk about this, that they are not really aware what kind of process, we are embarking on…. They have sort of been written out of the story." (Interview, Trine, project group).

Conclusively, the politicians were placed in a role of ‘linking agents’ between the two arenas, but were obviously not prepared to take this role and did not feel at ease. As a result of the role insecurity they either opted out of the process or retreated to their sedimented role perceptions, a reaction also identified in other studies (Agger & Sørensen, 2014).

**Hands-on leadership interventions:**
The hands-on leadership roles were primarily filled by civil servants from the Municipality of Holbæk, who did the job of designing, preparing and facilitating the meetings of the o-group. Through participation in the o-groups, heads of schools and kindergartens in the municipality also played a role in the hands-on framing of challenges and solutions.

**Building trust/relations and unfolding diversity among participants**
My observations show that the civil servants worked professionally with facilitating and designing the meeting processes in a way that would allow the building of trust and relations – and to a certain extent the unfolding of diversity. This was mirrored in the design of the dialogue in the o-group: The meeting design gave the participants the opportunity of working in small groups across stakeholder affiliations – to further the development of trust and affiliation between the participants. One example is the third meeting of the o-group which was mentioned by several participants as a particularly successful meeting. In this meeting, around one hundred participants were gathered to discuss possible solutions in the field of children and schools, as all members of the parent councils in the schools and kindergartens had been invited. The participants were divided into smaller groups and asked to perform a common SWOT analysis of some possible solutions. In general the experience among interviewees was, that this form of dialogue in small groups across stakeholders functioned well by making room for all participants to express their views and unfolding the nuances of the theme.

Generally, though, the meetings and dialogues of the o-group were primarily designed in such a way, that a range of different points of view were unfolded, but no seeking a common ground or conclusion was facilitated. In other words, the Municipality of Holbæk did not actively take a role of mediator between different interests or points of view. E.g. in the SWOT the participants pointed to strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities in relation to three possible solutions brought forward by the municipality. But no integration or conclusions were drawn from the analysis, leaving the municipality to singlehandedly interpret the results.

The role of the municipality as ‘facilitative leader’ was characterized by ambiguity: On the one hand investing a lot of resources and professionalism in the hands-on facilitation and design of the
process, and on the other hand enacting a strict hands-off framing of the task and objectives – in practice not leaving room for the participants to unfold diversity or different points of view.

**Sense-making: Framing and reframing of challenges and possible solutions**

In terms of framing and re-framing I again observe an ambiguity in the municipality’s role as facilitator: The hands-on process design invites participants to unfold a range of different frames and understandings of the challenges meeting children in schools and kindergartens. But at the same time, the ‘austerity’ framing imposed on the o-groups by the Municipality of Holbæk, does not in practice allow for genuine re-framing. A key element in the municipal framing was the story told by Holbæk Municipality about the schools and kindergartens in Holbæk through economic key figures and existing policies in the area of children and youth. The message was basically: Fewer children will be attending schools in the future, particularly in some of the rural districts. And as these schools will not be sustainable in the future, there is a need to close down some of the small schools and gather the children in bigger schools. The concept of ‘sustainability’ was central in the municipal framing of the challenges and was interpreted as economic and professional sustainability.

The meetings of the o-group were characterized by the municipality offering a dominant framing of the challenges and tasks from the beginning of the process. Gradually in the course of the meetings, the municipal framing became more dominant. In the early phase, the framing included only the challenges to be solved by the o-groups. But in the second phase the municipality also framed possible solutions in terms of necessary structural changes to the schools. Among the participants, a certain awareness and skepticism towards the dominant framing was apparent, expressed by a school-teacher: “.. I think, well, it is not about the children, it is about the money. And I am left there with a divide between the soft values and the budget.. They might as well have turned it around (setting the children first), exactly because you cannot always measure and weigh the human and the soft features. If we don’t give attention to that side of things, it disappears..” (interview, teacher, Anne Vang)

All in all, the stakeholders seemed prepared to accept the municipality’s ‘austerity’ framing of the challenges, i.e. the necessity of cutting expenditures. However, the dominant framing of the possible solutions was challenged by the stakeholders. An example: Some parents of children attending small schools in the rural areas argued for the significance of the local school for the sustainability of the rural community and expressed concern at the possible closing down of schools in the small, rural communities. This attempt at reframing the idea of ‘sustainability’, however, was not welcomed by the organizers. Managers from the Municipality of Holbæk, who participated in the meetings, did at several occasions acts as representatives defending the frame and point of view and ‘illegitimizing’ the viewpoints of other stakeholders.

In the course of the process, different stakeholders did attempt to challenge the dominant framing of the municipality. But the municipality did generally not meet the alternative framing of the stakeholders by facilitating a sense-making process re-framing the possible solutions.
The facilitation of mutual learning processes and co-production of knowledge

The meetings of the o-group were designed and facilitated in such a way as to support mutual learning processes, e.g. through dialogue across stakeholder groups. But the same time the Municipality of Holbæk took the role of dominant provider of knowledge by continuous communication of data concerning the demographic development, calculation of future expense, evaluation of effect etc. that supported the framing of the ‘austerity’ challenge advanced by the municipality.

Also, the municipality actively marginalized alternative forms of knowledge through hands-on facilitation. This regards f. inst. knowledge presented by participants from the rural communities that pointed to the importance of the local school in preserving an active leisure life for the children and the young people. This knowledge was framed by the municipality as ‘illegitimate’ vested interests. In an interview, one of the managers reflect on this mechanism: “We are prone to become angry with those (participants), that do not say the things we want to hear, f. inst. parents from the small, rural schools. We decide that they have a certain agenda, i.e. to preserve their schools – and then we do not really listen to what their worries are really about. We very easily put them in a box like: Oh, well, they are against – or they are just fighting for a certain agenda” (Interview, Thomas, project manager).

At a certain point in the process (after the second meeting) the top management of the municipality decided to ‘take the lead’ of the process. They had stopped believing in the o-group coming up with innovative new ideas, and decided to introduce three possible (structural) solutions to the ‘austerity’ challenges in the field of schools and kindergartens. They did so by means of introducing a body of data. The decision was described as follows by the director of the area: “(at this time in the process) we are thinking that we have got to come forward and to describe the facts. Now we have to say it: It is not an issue, if schools must be closed down. The issue is how many. .. We must use the data: It is obvious, that they will be dying eventually… and who other than us are able to show this picture – nobody else!” (interview, director, René).

The data which the municipality chose to advance at this point in the process, consisted of three possible solutions to the ‘austerity’ challenge within the area of schools and kindergartens. These three themes were put forward for the o-group and framed as "based on the preliminary work of the o-group", but was in reality based on calculations made by civil servants, before the process of the o-group.: "When we draw the lines – which of course we have already done to examine, if it is at all possible to reach the 22 million – that is when we realize that through re-structurings alone - by drawing new lines, it is possible to find 21,5 million without compromising the service level. That is the knowledge we have, so we are all the time thinking: How the hell can we introduce this knowledge –and should we introduce it?” (Interview, director, René)

All in all, the dominant framing and reluctance to re-frame on the part of the municipality influenced the learning-processes of the participants and restricted their possibility of co-producing knowledge in the collaboration process. The knowledge basis advanced by the municipality came to dominate.
A similar conclusion with respect to co-production of knowledge was found by Edelenbos et al. (Edelenbos, van Buuren, & van Schie, 2011).

Conclusion: Analyzing leadership of co-production

In this section I will conclude by reflecting on the insights into leadership of co-production processes produced by the framework. A central insight derived from the case analysis is the importance of hands-off leadership enacted by the public body in collaborative processes. Even though the co-production process in Holbæk was framed by the municipality as a collaborative and innovative process, the top civil servants of the municipality applied ‘traditional’, i.e. hierarchical leadership interventions in designing and framing the process. The hands-off leadership interventions enacted in the initiation phase of the process by the top civil servants came to play a significant role in the co-production process. This I interpret as an example of ‘excessive metagovernance’ as warned by Sørensen & Torfing (2009, p. 252) straightjacketing the co-production process.

By formulating two contradictory objectives, i.e. an output objective of budget cuts and an outcome objective of developing new relations and democratic dialogues, an institutional tension was introduced into the process. Holbæk i Fællesskab can be understood as an attempt to introduce a temporary collaborate arena in a context of hierarchical governance. This can be seen to create institutional tensions which then influence the hands-on leadership interventions enacted by civil servants. This conclusion is in line with the findings of Barnes et al., who found that new collaborative institutional mechanisms tend to produce institutional tensions and conflicting imperatives for actors (Barnes, Newman, & Sullivan, 2007).

In the case of Holbæk, the civil servants in charge of hands-on leadership interventions were placed in this field of tensions. They experienced an institutional pressure in terms of producing tangible results/outputs within a tight time-frame and responded by reverting to ‘institutionalized logics of action’ (Barnes et al., 2007) giving priority to the output objective. This pressure was expressed by the project leader in the following way: “It can be challenging in a process.... sometimes we laugh a little, because it is important to us to send the signal, that we do not have a hidden agenda. But there is something lying underneath all the time that we have to find this money. And we do know how to find them – more or less” (Interview, Thomas, project manager).

The analysis shows that the ‘facilitative’ hands-on leadership interventions enacted by the municipality were characterized by ambiguity: On the one hand investing a lot of resources and professionalism in the hands-on facilitation and design of the process, and on the other hand enacting a strict hands-off framing of the task and objectives – in practice not leaving room for hands-on leadership to unfold diversity, practice sense-making leadership or facilitate mutual learning processes.

A relevant question, then, is: In which way did the leadership interventions of the municipality sustain or prevent co-production taking place? A central constituting element in co-production is the
potential rearrangement of the relations between public employees and citizens/civil society. In term of this relation, researchers (Boyle & Harris, 2010; Durose, Mangan, et al., 2013; Needham & Carr, 2009; OECD, 2011) distinguish between three different levels of co-production at the level of description, recognition and transformation respectively.

On the basis of the analysis the Holbæk case can be categorized as a case of co-production at the level of recognition concerning the relation between citizens and the municipality. This I interpret as a result of the leadership interventions of the municipality in several ways: Through directive form of hands-off leadership interventions the Municipality of Holbæk in effect imposed the logic of consultation in the process – notably not a logic of co-production. This is apparent f. inst. in the invitation of stakeholders, who were selected and invited into the logic of consultation/deliberation to give opinions and deliberate and not seen as assets, resources to be invested in the solving of a common challenge. Also, by directive leadership, the municipality took on responsibility for the decision and implementation of solutions, not leaving any room for stakeholders to act constructively or take responsibility.

Through different forms of leadership intervention, the municipality came to decide the framing of the challenge and task of the o-groups, i.e. in terms of ‘austerity’ and budget cuts. Thereby, the possibility of recognizing other kinds of resources contributed by the stakeholders, such as voluntary initiatives, practical contributions or new solutions, were missed in the process. By not engaging in sense-making leadership interventions, the possibility of engaging and mobilizing the stakeholders for a common cause was missed in the process.

Conclusively, analyzing the process of the o-group in the Municipality of Holbæk from a collaborative governance point of view has led to interesting insights into the dynamics of leading co-production processes. In the case of Holbæk, the municipality in fact taking the role of ‘directive leader’ in the process ended up inhibiting the possibility of staging a transformative co-production process. Generally, analyzing co-production initiatives in a context of governance has potential to deepen our understanding of these processes. This paper has taken the first step, but more research is needed to explore leadership interventions enacted in different types of co-production processes and by different types of actors. More work should also be put into refining the analytical framework used to grasp the nuances of leadership interventions.

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