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Factors Influencing Collective Co-production of Services at the Municipal Level: A Case Study of the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy

Brian Kreps
Western University

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A Case Study of the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy

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Brian Kreps
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Abstract

The nature of public governance has changed over the past few decades which has led to increased interest in the study of governments working with residents to co-produceservices. The literature identifies different types of co-production including individual, group and collective and it also identifies factors associated with co-production. This paper explores the factors associated with co-production of services at the municipal level. This study uses a case study methodology focusing on the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy. The case study was conducted through review of publicly available planning documents, media reports and key informant interviews. The study finds that Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy was designed as a form of co-production and that co-production did take place. Several factors identified in the literature were found to be present in the case study, but several were not.

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Introduction

The role of government has shifted significantly since the later part of the 20th century (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Bourgon, 2011). Traditional understandings of public administration see governments as having the power, authority and capacity to solve significant social problems, but increasingly, governments have experienced a reduced ability to act in a unilateral manner. This is linked to the necessity of dealing with increasingly complex policy problems, reduced resources, changing expectations from citizens and increasing speed of communications (Bourgon, 2011). Bourgon (2011) sums it up explaining that complexity and breadth of many policy issues simply surpasses any single government's ability to affect change on their own, necessitating partnerships with other governments, for-profit and non-profit groups. This view is shared by Bovaird (2007, p. 846) who writes that "policy is now seen as the negotiated outcome of many interacting policy systems, not simply the preserve of policy planners and top decision makers."

Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) suggest that the shift necessitates that governments must change how they understand their role. They describe the change as a move from "steering to serving." This changing role involves helping the public to articulate their common interests rather than assuming that they know the public interest and are best positioned to act on it. Working with citizens to co-produce services has emerged as a strategy to respond to government's changing role (Bourgon, 2011; Bovaird 2007). Loeffler and Bovaird (2016, p. 1006) define co-production as "…public services, service

users and communities making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency." This definition makes it clear that co-production can occur with both individuals and groups. Co-production of public services is seen to have several potential benefits including improving efficiency of services, mobilizing resources that were not previously available, and increasing citizen trust (Bovaird, 2007; Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016).

Despite its potential benefits, co-production of public services is not universally embraced by public administrators and public administration theorists. Bovaird (2007) notes practical concerns including transaction costs as well as normative concerns about co-production diluting public accountability, potentially being biased toward higher income residents and placing a disproportionate burden on marginalized communiities. Numerous lines of research have attempted to better understand when and where co-production is most likely to occur. One line of research has identified a variety of factors that deter public administrators and politicians from engaging with citizens to co-produce services (Simrell King, Feltey, & O'Neill Susel, 1998; Ventriss, 2016). Another line has focused on studying the factors that increase the likelihood of governments engaging in co-production (Fledderus, Brandsen, & Honingh, 2014). Yet another has focused on changing organizational and individual practices to fully embrace the use of co-production in service delivery (Cooper, Bryer, & Meek, 2006).

This study will apply this literature to the municipal government setting in Ontario using the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy as a case study. It will describe

the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy, explore the extent to which it meets the definition of co-production and then assess the extent to which factors presented in the literature as increasing the likelihood of public administrators engaging in co-production are present in Hamilton.

Literature Review
Co-Production Defined

Co-production goes beyond efforts by government to engage citizens and inform policy choices. It is about governments and citizens working together to jointly produce public services. Joshi and Moore (2004, p. 40) offer the following definition, "Institutionalised co-production is the provision of public services (broadly defined, to include regulation) through regular, long-term relationships between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions". By reference to "institutional co-production," Joshi and Moore exclude temporary arrangements and those that are not grounded in a formalized institutional arrangement such as an unplanned emergency response in which government and citizens may spontaneously join together to address the urgent situation at hand.

Another definition is offered by Loeffler and Bovaird (2016, p. 1006) stating that co-production is "…public services, service users and communities making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency". Their definition highlights that both government and citizens bring assets to the process,

in contrast to the understanding of citizens merely bringing opinions and relying on government to supply resources. This implies a higher level of investment for both parties. Loeffler and Bovaird go on to explain that co-production is a more intensive form of citizen engagement as it speaks to joint action, not merely the articulation of preferences to be fulfilled by a government or other organization. For the purposes of this study, Loeffler and Bovaird's definition will be adopted for simplicity and focus on mutual investment.

The co-production literature distinguishes between participation by individuals and groups. Brudney and England (1983) employ a typology distinguishing between individual, group, and collective co-production. The typology focuses not just on who is involved, but on the distribution of benefits. Individual co-production can be seen as an inherent part of many types of service delivery including public health and social services. With these services, a government employee provides an intervention, but the outcome is dependent on the service recipient producing the outcome through their own actions such as changing health behaviours or securing employment. Individual co-production can be "captured" in which participation is required through legislation or the offering of benefits. With individual co-production, the benefits are accrued initially by the individual themselves and secondarily at a population level.

Group co-production, on the other hand, is focused on increasing the quality or quantity of benefits received by a specific group. The benefits are generally enjoyed directly by a circumscribed group which may already enjoy advantages of wealth or power. An

example would be a conservation authority working with members of a private golf club to plan for shared management of wetlands.

Collective co-production is distinct in that it offers benefits to a broader group of citizens beyond those engaged in the activity. Brudney and England (1983 P. 64) write that "Inherent in the definition of collective coproduction is the notion of a redistribution of benefits from citizen activity. Regardless of which citizens participate in the service delivery process, the benefits accrue to the city as a collectivity".

Whether co-production is at the individual, group or collective level, citizens can play a variety of roles. In their meta-analysis of the literature on co-production, Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers (2015) identify three primary roles for citizens including co-initiator, co-designer, and co-implementer. The role of initiator speaks to participation in framing a program or policy response and could even extend to direct participation in commissioning. Co-designing could involve citizen participation in developing a project or program including its framing and specification. The co-implementer role is the most frequently studied and involves citizens playing a role, however big or small, in the direct delivery of the service. Co-production does not require that all these roles are played by citizens in every occurrence.

Co-production at each level can be seen to have different dynamics. At the individual level, government works with citizens individually to produce individual benefits. This type of co-production is often about individual behavior change and involves a singular

relationship. Benefits accrue to society at a population level as the impact of many individuals making changes accumulates and citizen motivation may be self-interested or altruistic. At the group level, governments work with citizens who are organized into a common interest group such as members of a golf club or other voluntary association. The members of the group will directly benefit from their effort. Since they will directly benefit, they have a high motivation to participate and the relationship is between government and the group. This study is interested in collective co-production as it focuses on governments working with groups of citizens who are coming together to work toward a public goal that will benefit all citizens.

Governments must be aware of the limitations of co-production for citizens. Given the wide array of demands on their time, citizens can burn out after prolonged involvement with co-production activities. A free-rider problem can also emerge with citizens taking advantage of the benefit achieved through co-production without contributing to it. Direct involvement with co-production can also result in a form of capture and limit the ability of groups to lobby government. Some practical challenges include differences in the values held by co-producing parties, unclear division of roles and incompatible incentives. Each of these challenges would make it very had to secure and maintain engagement of citizens. Another limitation is that co-production can blur lines of accountability, making it hard to hold parties to account (Bovaird, 2007).

Sumrall King et al. (1998) identify three types of barriers to increased citizen participation in co-production. The first is the competing demands of daily life. Being

involved in these types of activities requires time and resources. When these are absent, citizens are much less likely to become involved. Administrative processes that engage people too late or in ineffective ways were also identified as barriers as they may become discouraged by the lack of meaningful input. Following from this, techniques used to engage citizens can also become barriers. Some techniques, such as public hearings, are too one-sided and advisory councils are often not sufficiently representative of the community.

A survey of residents of five cities in the United Kingdom explored factors associated with citizen decisions to engage in individual and collective co-production (Bovaird et al. 2016). The researchers found that individual and collective co-production have different characteristics and correlates. Both individual and collective co-production were found to be positively associated with citizens' sense of self-efficacy and an overall sense of satisfaction with with government consultation on the issue. While this research is primarily concerned with factors associated with government use of co-production, this highlights the importance of understanding what influences citizens' decision to participate.

What organizational factors support government use of co-production?

Co-production differs significantly from traditional understandings of government's role as the sole provider of services to citizens. The question naturally arises as to what factors support the use of collective co-production. Factors can be grouped into organizational factors and individual staff factors. This first section focuses on

organizational factors associated with co-production. Joshi and Moore (2004) indicate that co-production is spurred by governance or logistical drivers. In the context of their study of co-production in developing countries, they talk about governance drivers as relating to diminished legitimacy or capacity to govern and logistical drivers as relating to technical challenges for government to provide services directly. Governance drivers may look different in developed countries, but still exist. Bourgon's (2011) writing suggests that in a developed country, governance drivers might relate to complex policy issues of overlapping jurisdiction where no single government or organization can act unilaterally to achieve the necessary outcome. Technical challenges can certainly exist in the developed countries as well. For example, rural municipalities may work with groups of citizens to run far-flung community halls because it may not make financial sense for the municipality to staff a little-used facility directly.

Perhaps the most significant factor is that of a government's willingness to share power with citizens (Arnstein, 1969). Fundamental to the concept of co-production is that citizens are given much greater power to determine the nature of the problem, the method to solve it as well as participating in the implementation. Ventriss (2016) suggests that in arguing for co-production writers have not sufficiently addressed the implications for the distribution of power between citizens and government officials. Without acknowledging the asymmetrical distribution of power between governments and citizens, it would be impossible to address the underlying dynamic for governments to engage citizens in the co-production of public services.

Fledderus, Brandsen & Honingh (2015) note that co-production can affect governments and citizens differently. They write that "…although co-production of public service delivery decreases uncertainty for users, it seems to increase uncertainty for organizations (p. 152)". Uncertainty is reduced for citizens because they have the opportunity be directly involved in the delivery of the services ensuring that their needs and preferences are addressed. In contrast, involving citizens in the delivery of services can reduce the predictability of the process and the outcome for government. This uncertainty can make government less willing to engage in co-production.

Fledderus et al. (2015) suggest that organizations can take a closed or open system approach to reducing uncertainty. Closed systems manage uncertainty by adapting internal processes to reduce uncertainty which can result in the exclusion of groups who may introduce variability. In can also result in limiting the ability of process participants to actually affect the outcome by reducing opportunities for input for carefully controlling the range of input that can be provided. The efforts to reduce uncertainty can frustrate process particpants and reduce trust in government. In contrast, an open system approach can also be taken, which recognizes fragmentation. Open systems focus on the benefits of uncertainty and negotiate levels of involvement for process participants. As part of this, they also deal with the uncertainty by discussing it with staff and users. To foster co-production, Ventriss (2016) suggests that that governments adopt a "co-possibility approach" that promotes a learning environment that encourages experimentation, innovation and disaggregated policy making. For Ventriss (2016), governments need to adopt a culture of substantive learning where new information is

integrated in ways that can shift the underlying rules for policy making. Another aspect

of this approach is a move toward increased use of disaggregated policy making. This

means focusing on policy-making at smaller, more local levels to recognize the

heterogeneity of citizens.

In their systematic review of literature on co-production, Voorberg, Bekkers and

Tummers (2015, p. 1342) found that the most frequently identified influential factor was

"compatibility of public organizations with citizen participation." It is worth noting that it

was identified in nearly 50% of the articles, more than double the next most frequently

identified factor. This category in their study included several varied concepts including

the presence of supportive organizational structures, policies or communication

infrastructure. It follows that having structures or policies that invite public participation

would support its use and decrease barriers for staff.

Risk aversion is identified as another influential factor relating to co-production

(Voorberg et al., 2015 & Loeffler and Bovaird 2016). Increasing the involvement of

citizens in public decision-making can be perceived to increase the level of risk either

because participation may be less predictable or the outcome may be less certain. This

uncertainty could be perceived to reflect negatively on public administrator's

performance. It can also reflect layers of approval that may be required within some

organizations.

The final factor identified in Voorberg et al.'s (2015) systematic review was the, "presence of clear incentives for co-creation." Consistent with the earlier discussion about uncertainty, co-production could seem unlikely to yield outcomes worth the potential risk to some administrators. Additionally, public servants could see citizens as unreliable either in terms of commitment or knowledge. This could stem from a fundamental belief that people will only act in their self-interest or that they simply do not possess the knowledge or skills to meaningfully contribute (Cooper et al., 2006). A lack of clear incentives speaks to a paucity of rewards for public servants. One imagines that their decision to engage in co-production involves a calculation of many factors and that many individual and organizational factors would create inertia.

What individual staff factors are associated with co-production

Other researchers find that the attitudes, beliefs and skills of individual public administrators determine the likelihood that they will engage in co-production (Voorberg et al., 2015). This was the second most frequently cited factor in Voorberg et al.'s systematic review. This broad category includes a variety of concepts including, staff belief in the value of citizen participation, belief in the effectiveness of citizen participation, as well as reluctance to lose status and control. Concerns about the loss of professional status are also identified as a barrier to co-prodution by Loeffler and Bovaird (2016). These concerns could stem from a professionally ingrained expectation that the public administrator's power and influence comes come their expertise in a content area. Underlying this support must be a willingness on the part of politicians and management to give up control (Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016). Relating to this is the

need for support from politicians and senior leadership, without which staff will be

hesitant to act. It is especially important for their support to be expressed publicly. This

is especially true when things go wrong (Bovaird, 2007). The belief that co-production

takes strong leadership from the top may be justified leading to the conclusion that

organizations with healthy distributed leadership may be in the best position to adopt

co-production (Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016).

Incorporating co-production into government service provision is also supported by

specific knowledge and skills on the part of public administrators. Denhardt and

Denhardt (2000, p. 553) write that, "This new world requires new skills of public

servants. It is less about management control and more about brokering, negotiating

and conflict resolution". Sicilia, Guarini, Sancino, Andreani, and Ruffini (2017) came to

a similar conclusion in their study of co-production in the context of multi-level

governance. They write that:

> From a managerial perspective, our case study demonstrated that the
> implementation of co-production required new managerial skills and
> tools. In particular, public managers were asked to listen to users and
> community groups, to mobilize collective resources and knowledge in
> order to meet the public interest, and to exercise a meta-governance
> role with a view of the public sector that is systemic and oriented toward
> final outcomes. Moreover, the main element for guaranteeing capacity-
> building and the sustainability of co-production was the ability of public
> managers to manage co-productive fatigue, nurture co-productive
> behaviors, and facilitate their continuance even when public funding
> ceased. (p. 23)

Others skills mentioned include process and interpersonal skills, communication,

conflict resolution, listening, team building, meeting facilitation, and self-knowledge

(Simrell King et al., 1998; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000; Ventriss, 2016). Ventriss

(2016) builds on these points adding that public administrators need an, "Understanding

[of] conflicting administrative tasks, goals, and priorities and how to balance specific

community needs and agency goals." This skill is one that some public administrators

learn on the job, but it is unlikely that it is part of any formal curriculum or professional

development.

Several researchers have noted that co-production of public services requires that

public administrators work differently than they have traditionally done (Bovaird, 2007;

Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016; Sicilia et al., 2016). Bovaird (2007, p. 858) describes the need

for a, "new public service ethos or compact in which the central role of professionals is

to support, encourage, and coordinate the coproduction capabilities of service users

and the communities in which they live". This is very different role for public servants

than has traditionally been conceived. Denhardt and Denhardt (2000, p. 535) suggest

that the shift would mean that, "Government acts, in concert with private and nonprofit

groups and organizations, to seek solutions to the problems that communities face. In

this process, the role of government is transformed from one of controlling to one of

agenda setting, bringing the proper players to the table and facilitating, negotiating, or

brokering solutions to public problems..." In this new role relationships and networks

become more important and shared investment and risk recognized. According to

Bovaird (2007), co-production requires that mutual relationships must be built between

public administrators and citizens. These relationship should be reciprocal in which

each party trusts the other, listens to each others' advice, takes advantage of their

support and takes risks. This fundamentally changes the role public administrator from dictating the rules of engagement to a participant engaged in negotiation.

Many of these skills may not have been part of traditional education and Simrell King et al. (1998) talk about "reeducating administrators" as an approach to support change toward new approaches to working with citizens. One aspect of this is to help public administrators shift from seeing themselves as experts to seeing themselves as partners. This is echoed in Ventriss' (2016) discussion about the importance of "subordinating authority/power" so that public administrators do not dominate.

To summarize, the literature review has identified several factors associated with government use of collective co-production which are outlined in Table A below. The factors include situations in which capacity or logistical factors render it the best choice. They also include tolerance for uncertainty, risk aversion, willingness to share power, presence of appropriate staff and management skills, valuing citizen contribution, flexible view of professional role, support from senior leaders and presence of incentives for public administrators. It is also worth noting that the factors are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In some cases, they can be seen as facets of a common concept. These connections are highlighted in the table below.

Table A – Factors associated with government co-production of services

	Factors	**Citation**
Organizational Factors		
Governance	Lack of governance capacity to provide the service directly	Joshi and Moore (2004)
	Governance is complicated by overlapping and uncertain jurisdiction	Bourgon (2011)
Logitistical	Logistical challenges make direct service provision difficult or impossible.	Joshi and Moore (2004)
Power - Sharing	Government willingness to share power	Arnstein (1969) & Ventriss (2016)
Uncertainty	Co-production increases uncertainty for governments and reduces it for citizens	Fledderus, Brandsen & Honingh (2015)
Risk Aversion	Organizational pre-disposition to avoid risk	Voorberg et al., (2015) & Loeffler and Bovaird (2016)
Incentives	Lack of clear incentives to engage in co-production	Voorberg et al. (2015)
Senior Leadership	Support from senior leaders and politicians	Loeffler and Bovaird (2016)
Organizational Culture	Culture of experimentation and learning	Fledderus et al (2015), Ventriss (2016)
Organizational Infrastructure	Presence of structures to support participation	Bekkers and Tummers (2015)
Individual Factors		
Staff Skills	Skills such as facilitation, negotiation and engagement	Bovaird (2007), Loeffler & Bovaird (2016), Sicilia et al., (2016), Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), Simrell King et al. (1998), Ventriss (2016).
Staff Attitudes and Beliefs	Staff beliefs and attitude support co-production	Voorberg et al., (2015)

Methodology

The research question for this study is to what degree does Hamilton's Neighbourhood

Action Strategy (NAS) reflect the factors associated with collective co-production

described in the literature? This deductive question will be tested using a case study

methodology. Van Thiel (2014) notes that the case study methodology can be used for both deductive and inductive methods, but that reliability of its findings will be limited. The City of Hamilton's decision to use a co-production approach for its Neighbourhood Action Strategy will serve as the case for this study.

This qualitative method was selected so that a holistic approach could be taken to garner the deepest possible understanding of the NAS and the factors supporting or hindering its use of co-production. Most research into co-production has been conducted through case studies (Voorberg et al., 2015; Loeffler and Bovaird, 2016). Jakobsen's (2012) randomized field experiment looking at the ability of government to increase co-production in individuals and Bovaird, Stoker, Jones, Loeffler, and Pinella Roncancio's (2016) survey of residents of five UK cities are exceptions. Both studies explore individual citizens' participation in co-production using surveys.   While several factors related to collective co-production have been identified, they are not so precisely specified that they would lend themselves well to a more empirical study methodology.

Neighbourhood strategies have been embraced by many Ontario municipalities over the past decade. The City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy has been selected as a case study for several reasons. Hamilton is the 5th largest city in Ontario, so its experience may be more easily generalizable that that of larger Ontario municipalities such as Toronto or Ottawa. Hamilton's has a long history of neighbourhood development and poverty reduction focusing on community development at the neighbourhood level which provided a foundation for the City's strategy.

The first task in this study will be to confirm to what degree Hamilton's NAS complies with the definition of collective co-production put forward by Joshi and Moore (2004). Their definition is "Institutionalised co-production is the provision of public services (broadly defined, to include regulation) through regular, long-term relationships between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions (p.40)." The second task is to determine the extent to which the factors associated with collective coproduction are demonstrated in this case. The case study will be developed through analyzing documents produced by and about the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Documents reviewed include:

- Reports to Hamilton City Council;
- Evaluation documents; and
- Media reports regarding the strategy.

The document analysis was used to understand the structure of the decision-making process, stated goals, desired impacts, metrics for success, and the anticipated roles of various participants.

Interviews were conducted with six individuals involved in creating and implementing the NAS. The participants were current and previous officials with the City of Hamilton and non-profit agencies that had direct and ongoing involvement in the strategy. Review of NAS documents revealed that a relatively small number of people were

involved as central decision makers in the development and implementation of the strategy.

Interviews were used to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants in the development and implementation of the NAS as they related to the factors that are supportive of co-production. This is information that was unlikely to be addressed in the document analysis.   The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that information regarding the factors was gathered in a consistent manner, yet still allowed flexibility for the participants to provide rich and in-depth responses. The interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed in preparation for analysis. Given the relatively small number of interviews, the analysis was done manually rather than using a qualitative software program. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and that any quotes would not be attributed directly to them[1].

Analysis
Overview of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS)

Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS) should be viewed in the context of the city's history of community development and attempts to address poverty and health inequity. Community development had been taking place in Hamilton's neighbourhoods for decades in a variety of forms. The largest community development effort in recent history is the work of the Hamilton Community Foundation, which funded

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[1] . Because the research involved human subjects, ethics approval was sought and obtained through Western University's Human Research Ethics Board.

neighbourhood development activities through several programs beginning with Strengthening Roots: Growing Neighbourhoods.   The Hamilton Community Foundation's work was complemented by the efforts of the Social Planning and Research Council and others who undertook development work in other neighbourhoods in effort to reduce the effects of poverty or issues such as gang violence in specific neighbourhoods. A common element of this work was the use of community developers to engage the neighbourhood residents to understand their needs and help them develop strategies to bring about change. Under Strengthening Roots: Growing Neighbourhoods, the Hamilton Community Foundation had community development workers in four neighbourhoods (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2016). The community development workers focused their efforts on leadership development and community building and used a fairly "organic" approach.

In 2004, the Hamilton Community Foundation sharpened its focus on poverty reduction through the creation of the Tackling Poverty Together grant program. A year later, the Hamilton Community Foundation broadened its focus on poverty reduction and began collaborating with the City of Hamilton to develop the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2016). The Hamilton Round Table for Poverty Reduction represented an attempt to focus all sectors of the community on reducing poverty. As co-convenors, the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Foundation invested significant amounts of funding and lent their credibility to the cause (Makhoul, 2007). In 2007, the Hamilton Community Foundation deepened its commitment to poverty reduction by launching the second phase of its Tackling Poverty

Together grant program. This iteration created a tighter focus by supporting resident-led community hubs in six neighbourhoods (Neighbourhood Action Evaluation Team, 2016). Eventually, the work was expanded to two additional neighbourhoods.

In August, 2010, the Hamilton Spectator, Hamilton's daily newspaper, produced a series entitled Code Red that provided a reminder that poverty was still a significant problem in Hamilton. The Code Red series was a collaboration between the Hamilton Spectator and a McMaster University researcher and involved the analysis of data regarding a variety of health outcomes by neighbourhood. The multi-part series garnered widespread attention because of the significant disparities in health outcomes it identified. One disparity that received a lot of attention was the conclusion that there was a 21-year difference in life expectancy between one of Hamilton's wealthiest neighbourhoods and one of its poorest (The Hamilton Spectator, 2010). To highlight the contrast further, the Hamilton Spectator wrote of the neighbourhood with the low life expectancy that the, "same North End neighbourhood would rank 165th in the world for life expectancy, tied with Nepal, just ahead of Pakistan and worse than India, Mongolia and Turkmenistan" (The Hamilton Spectator, 2010).

The Code Red series became an impetus for renewed efforts to address poverty and the associated health disparities in the city. There was a sense that earlier efforts had not made a significant difference and that a new approach was needed that would have a greater impact and be sustainable. The idea of a neighbourhood-focused strategy emerged as potential solution and was ultimately championed by Hamilton's City

Manager and General Manager of its social services department. Neighbourhood

initiatives had been undertaken in many North American cities and several examples

were reviewed including Edmonton, Seattle, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Seattle's

approach was chosen as the model to emulate. Part of the appeal of Seattle's

approach was that it provided a significant role for residents to shape neighbourhood

plans. At the same time, the neighbourhood plans and planning process were woven

into the City's planning structure and would inform land-use planning and the delivery of

numerous services provided by the city of Seattle. The desire to deeply engage

residents in shaping the future of their neighbourhood and better integrate the delivery

of municipal services became the underpinning of the drive toward a neighbourhood

strategy in Hamilton. A study participant indicated that, "The intent… was that the NAS

would start to knit together some of these siloed programs because they [municipal

staff] would all be coming to the same tables."

Building on their collaboration as co-convenors of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty

Reduction, the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Foundation began exploring

how their efforts could be combined to create a robust neighbourhood strategy. There

was a recognition that they could each play vital, complementary roles. A plan emerged

to coordinate the Hamilton Community Foundation's work supporting community hubs in

many of the neighbourhoods identified as experiencing some of the greatest health

disparities with the City of Hamilton's mandate to provide services to these same

neighbourhoods. An arrangement was created whereby the Community Foundation

would merge its community development efforts, including funding for community

development workers and a small grants program into a new Neighbourhood Action

Strategy that would include a dedicated focus from the City of Hamilton to support the

overarching planning process and use the neighbourhood plans to guide municipal

service delivery.

In the fall of 2010, Hamilton City Council approved, a neighbourhood initiative that was

focused on two key goals, specifically: a) improving "Code Red" neighbourhoods and b)

better integration and focus between the City and community actions at a

neighbourhood level (City of Hamilton, 2011). At the same time, Hamilton's City Council

approved $2 million from a reserve to support the plan. This was a significant

investment for Hamilton's Council to make, especially when you consider that they were

approving a concept rather than a detailed plan. One of the respondents noted that,

"many councillors were concerned, a lot of the neighbourhoods in their areas were

being highlighted in Code Red so I think there was a general desire to do something,

politically." The decision to fund the Neighbourhood Action Strategy occurred

immediately prior to a municipal election. Some study participants wondered if this may

have increased the level of support around the council table, as it may have been

politically popular.

Key activities for the strategy included the development of a team of community

development workers who would support the neighbourhoods to develop action plans

and facilitate the implementation of those plans through the alignment of municipal

investment. The original report also included approval for the hiring of a Director of

Poverty Reduction and Neighbourhood Initiatives to lead the work. The Office of Neighbourhood Initiatives was situated in the City Manager's Office. One of the respondents noted that this was done, "to establish its importance across the departments…so you could have city-wide ownership and a culture change." While it was recognized that some dedicated staff resources were needed, the intention was to limit the use of dedicated staff and use existing staff from the various City departments to the greatest extent possible. The funding for the community development workers was provided by the Hamilton Community Foundation. The initial report specified that the neighbourhoods identified as experiencing high levels of inequality in the Code Red series would be targeted.

Hamilton's NAS As an Example of Co-production

As was noted above, the goals of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy were to improve Code Red neighbourhoods and better integrate City services at the neighbourhood level. It is important to note that this research project was not designed to evaluate if these goals were achieved or the effectiveness of co-production in supporting these goals. This section seeks only to establish whether the Neighbourhood Action Strategy was indeed intended or designed to incorporate co-production and to what degree it achieved this.

The report approved by Hamilton City Council in 2011 outlined the approach that was to be used to work with the neighbourhoods. It does not speak to co-production directly. It does, however, describe a philosophy and lay out a few best-practices gleaned from

other communities that speak to communities and government both contributing resources and working together to produce services. The Council Report detailed the following best practices that will be followed in Hamilton's Neighbourhood Strategy:

- Community Development Workers are critical human resources that support 'relationship building'

- Plans must be holistic and comprehensive;

- A multi-sector approach is key;

- Planning must be inclusive and resident led;

- Plans must focus on the long-term; and

- Measurement of outcomes is critical

This approach positions community development workers as a critical part of the model of supporting the neighbourhoods through their own process to develop a neighbourhood plan. The report also states that the community development workers will work from an Assets-Based Community Development Perspective. Assets-Based Community Development was developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) as an alternative to "needs-based planning." In traditional needs-based planning, attention is placed on identifying needs or deficits within a community and then identifying strategies to address them. The strategies generally originate outside the community in question and are brought into the community. Assets-based planning starts from the premise that every community has assets and that they should be the starting point for planning. It also holds that planning should be inward focusing starting with the residents and then engaging external resources to help implement the plan.

Assets-Based Community Development can be seen to turn traditional conceptions of planning and service delivery upside down. Instead of starting with a government or an agency planning services based on their mandate, it starts with the community and the residents. Through a structured process, communities establish their priorities and then seek partners to help them deliver on them. Partners join with residents to deliver services that fit with their goals through ongoing interaction. Consistent with this approach, the Neighbourhood Action Strategy worked to encourage broad groups of residents to come together to develop the plans. One interview participant noted that, "A lot of the theory on neighbourhood change is that if it is not resident-led it doesn't have the staying power." The same participant described the nature of the plans as they were originally envisioned saying, "The plans did not have any parameters around only being about the city. The question we asked residents was pretty simple, what are the things we can work together on to make this a better neighbourhood in which you can live, work, play, and learn?" If ideas emerged that related to education or healthcare, the intention was to support linkages to the institutions and governments that provided those services. It also specified that the plans belonged to the neighbourhood and that Hamilton's Council was not approving them, but rather endorsing them and directing staff to support their implementation.

This arrangement certainly has elements of co-production as the relationship involves residents bringing forward their assets (resources) and those of their neighbourhood to work with governments to plan and deliver services. This is especially reflective of

Loeffler and Bovaird's (2016) definition of co-production which includes "public services, service users and communities making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency."

Study participants indicated that there was relatively little resistance to the approval of and use of this approach. As one of the study participants noted, "It was hard to be against the Neighbourhood Action Strategy." Given the attention from the Hamilton Spectator's Code Red Series, action of some kind was required to begin addressing the disparities in income and health outcomes across neighbourhoods. While Council did invest $2 million from a reserve in the project, much of the funding to operationalize the strategy would come from other sources including the Hamilton Community Foundation and other partners such as McMaster University. This reduced the cost of the commitment by Council. As was noted earlier, the neighbourhood strategy was approved immediately prior to the 2010 municipal election, making this a hard item turn down. Councilors also had some cover as the new council could always reverse the decision. While support was widespread, it was not without some trepidation. A councilor is quoted in the Ancaster News saying, "We like this, but we are nervous of the outcomes" (Ancaster News, 2011).

A significant factor in the approval of the strategy was the leadership of Hamilton's City Manager. All of those interviewed referenced his support as being critical to getting the initiative off the ground. He had a very good relationship with council and the strength of his support would likely have reassured councilors who may have had doubts. His

leadership would also have been influential with the members of his Senior

Management Team who controlled important financial and human resources to support

the initiative. One of the people interviewed noted that, "The buy in for it [the strategy]

was from all the senior management team, the senior managers were all interested in

how they could participate and be part of this. It didn't get pigeon holed as a planning

approach or a social services approach or a physical infrastructure approach." Support

from senior leadership is one of the factors identified in the literature as supporting the

co-production of services.

Implementation of Co-production Approach

While support was perceived to be strong at the outset of the initiative, it is worth

considering that Councilors and City officials did not fully understand the implications of

this new approach as it was being proposed. The new "resident-led" approach was a

break from traditional ways of government interacting with their residents. The May 9,

2011 report to Hamilton's Emergency and Community Services committee describes

the Neighbourhood Strategy what this new approach means for the City of Hamilton.

> "The Neighbourhood Development Strategy seeks to define a new
> way of working with residents at the neighbourhood level. Allowing
> residents to lead planning processes, supported by the technical
> knowledge of City staff and community partners, will ensure the
> building of more holistic plans with more ownership of the plans by
> the residents. The Neighbourhood Development Strategy will also
> provide a framework for stronger cross-departmental alignment."

As was noted earlier, the Hamilton Community Foundation had been working with

neighbourhoods for more than a decade. Its work had taken a fairly "organic approach"

and informed the implementation of the Neighbourhood Action Strategy. The Social

Planning and Research Council's experience had been similar in its neighbourhood

work. Under the Neighbourhood Action Strategy, planning could unfold differently in each neighbourhood's distinct context, yet there were some common expectations in terms of broad engagement with residents and transparency about the process.

Interview participants noted that the actual strategy evolved over time. In 2010, Council approved the development of a strategy and in May, 2011 they approved a strategy that was still relatively high level. Following approval of the development of a strategy conversations began with existing neighbourhood planning tables, many of which had been supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation. While there was a desire to let the process unfold by working in partnership with the neighbourhood residents, there were "imperatives" to begin producing outcomes.

Introducing the City of Hamilton into the mix created some opportunities and challenges for residents, partners and City staff. Several respondents identified that the City had traditionally taken a more limited view of what it meant to work with residents. It would often involve one way communication with residents informing them of changes. In other cases, it focused on seeking preferences between pre-determined options. This new way of working required City staffers to become participants in community planning processes rather than its leaders. One of the interview participants stated that, "sitting down at the table for a long period of time and planning out the actions that the neighbourhoods wanted to see happen and then taking those actions back into the municipal structure was very, very new."

Some staff embraced this new approach to working with neighbourhood residents. For them, it was consistent with their values and belief in the value of citizen participation. Three of the study participants noted that some municipal staff "just believed" in the philosophy and approach embodied in the NAS and did everything they could to help. One of the study participants conveyed that, "The NAS legitimized certain approaches and practices" that previously had felt undervalued or even forbidden." At its best, the strategy and the neighbourhood focus was described as giving people latitude to do what makes sense for residents and step outside of confining silos or processes. A study participant indicated that, "…there are many people within the city who could step outside of their normal processes to move things forward."

Several interview participants noted that this approach did not appear to be consistent with some municipal staff members' values and beliefs. One interview subject noted that, "Some staff got it, but many did not. Some thought they were already doing it and some didn't value it." The incongruence with staff beliefs and values at times led to resistance to working with residents in this new way. Another interview subject was even more blunt stating that, "We don't trust people to make good decisions." This lack of trust translated into resistance to letting residents play a central role in planning or participating in implementation.

One of the participants talked about the value of this approach to local politicians. The local planning process was seen by some municipal politicians as helpful because ideas had already been vetted by residents, allowing them to vote for it knowing support was

widespread. It was suggested that it also created a different dynamic when specific

proposals were brought to Council for approval.   One study participant stated that,

> "Council really enjoyed the sense that the community was in
> favour of this en masse. This made it easier for them to approve
> elements we would bring forward later whether it was funding or
> partnership opportunities because it was something that was
> attached to something with broad support, the umbrella of
> protection was greater."

The same study participant went on to say that a council member commented that they,

"have never seen this many people in council chamber who are *for* something."

Transitioning from planning to implementation was identified as the time when

challenges became more prevalent. Difficulty relinquishing power and control were

among the most common challenges identified by interview participants. Part of this

was reticence relinquishing control of agenda setting and decision-making. A study

participant indicated that, "I had many colleagues at the city incensed early on because

of where the plans were going because it did not address what they saw as the real

needs." Another participant observed that, "In some cases, we didn't let go" and that

this is problematic because for this approach to work because "we need to be equal at

the table."

While the resident-led planning process had some advantages for politicians, three of

the study participants mentioned that councillors found it challenging. In several

situations, community plans contained priorities that did not resonate with the councillor

for that neighbourhood. This was seen as putting the councillor in the position of

needing to vote against her residents' preferences to see preferred projects brought to fruition.

Closely related to the issue of power and control is the perceived threat to municipal's staff's professional identify and expertise. This can be seen as being related to power, as professional identify can conveys a certain power and authority. For the purposes of this study, it is being treated separately. Three of the study participants touched on issues regarding municipal staff and their role. In some cases, it was reported that municipal staff felt they knew what needed to happen and there was concern about having their work driven by residents. As trained and experienced professionals, some felt they should not need to spend so much time engaging residents. One interview participant recalled that, "some municipal staff wanted to go off and do their work, but we had tough conversations about needing to continue to work with the neighbourhoods." Another study participant summed it up saying, "I think it was just about learning how we are going to deal differently with neighbourhoods." Part of the difficulty was identified as municipal staff valuing professional expertise over the experience and preferences of residents. A study participant provided the following example, "Engineers would say, I know how to build a bridge, or I am an architectural designer, I know how to build the archway to this park, why do I need to work with the community to do that?"

Staff skill and knowledge of how to work with the residents was noted in four of the six interviews as supporting or inhibiting the NAS' goals. It was acknowledged that some municipal staff already possessed the relationship-building and facilitation skills required

to work effectively with the neighbourhood planning groups. Other staff did not acquire the skills as part of their training or work experience. One interview subject stated that, "We take it for granted that you can take anyone and drop them into a group and they will be able to manage." Another interview subject noted that, "There were just people who didn't buy in because they didn't understand it. There were people who just didn't buy-in because they didn't agree with it. But there were people who just didn't understand it and how it would work." In some cases, staff members were much more comfortable relying on technical knowledge to address some neighbourhood concerns rather than engaging residents further. In order to work differently with neighbourhoods and residents, one of the interview subjects mused that perhaps municipal staff need to unlearn some of their training. Two of the respondents identified that training for municipal staff should have been part of the NAS as it may have helped increase their sense of comfort and competency in working directly with residents. One interview participant stated, "I think we should have done some staff training. We should have held some real focused workshops on what community engagement was."

Risk aversion was only mentioned by two of the interview participants. One of the respondents identified that risk was a constant discussion throughout the implementation of the strategy and the actions within the plan. While risk aversion was not identified as having stopped any activities, it was identified as requiring lots of staff time and attention. One of the respondents indicated that, "Some things we would have thought would have been very basic like having residents meet in a community centre became a quagmire of risk management…and sometimes it felt like the whole strategy

was being driven by risk management." It is important to note that risk management was cited as a bigger problem with seemingly small actions, while large scale actions such as the development of a three acre piece of land in Hamilton's east end did not raise significant risk concerns.

The study participant who raised the issue of risk management also mentioned that some staff were hesitant to push boundaries because they perceived their jobs might be at risk. This came up in a discussion about the fact it was hard to please all the parties involved in the NAS and that when residents were displeased, they would often contact their councillor. While staff do not report to councillors, it was suggested that some staff perceived that making decisions that might be unpopular with residents could potentially affect their career.

The interviews revealed some challenges for the residents who participated in the local planning processes as well. One of the themes was that residents experienced frustration when faced with municipal and institutional regulations and processes. After being engaged in community planning process, some residents became frustrated with how slowly things moved or, in some cases, that they did not happen at all. While the NAS was intended to create new ways of municipal staff working with residents, many existing processes remained in place. Funding was available through the Hamilton Community Foundation's small grants process and $2 million was available from Council, but many expenses were covered through the City's regular capital budgeting process which is planned over a 10-year period. One study participant commented,

"Then the residents come back saying, there's government again putting up obstacles, all the bureaucracy of government again." In some instances, these barriers were tied to legal requirements such as land use planning, construction permits or municipal procurement by-laws. Several of the study participants referenced efforts to explain "how government works" to residents. One study participant provided the following example of an attempt to explain the challenges,

> "We had one of our landscape managers come down one day and explain why it [the process] is so slow. He reminded them there are 147 pieces of legislation that could impact a major redevelopment of park, everything from usual things like run-off and through to the migratory pattern of birds."

The discussion above regarding the receptiveness of municipal staff suggests that not all the barriers may have come from legal mandates or other immutable sources. In some instances, staff may have been blindly following protocols and procedures. In other situations, they may not have felt they had the latitude or discretion to use a different process with the neighbourhood residents and the fulfillment of the neighbourhood plans.

All those interviewed indicated that these challenges were not fully anticipated by the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Foundation. Three of the interview participants talked about ways in which additional support could have been provided to residents to help educate them about policy-making and bureaucratic decision making. "I don't know that we spent enough time building the infrastructure to help the residents and city staff understand that interface," said one interview participant. While residents

still may have felt disappointment, the feeling among interview participants was that education might have allowed residents to put timelines or barriers into perspective.

A related theme, is frustration among both residents and municipal staff linked to clear roles and responsibilities. As the project moved from the development of plans to their implementation conflicts emerged over the role the residents and resident planning groups were to play. Some felt they should have the ability to direct resources and staff. Since residents had developed the plans, they expected to remain involved throughout the development of projects such as park re-development. This did not always happen as municipal staff reverted to old patterns. Having consulted, they set off to do their work. One of the interview participants reflected that, "If you are co-developing something I think there needs to be expectations on the roles and responsibilities all parties have." Another indicated that, "I don't think we prepared residents for those conversations very well and, quite frankly, I don't think we prepared staff for those conversations very well." All acknowledged that these conflicts were predictable in hindsight, but were not apparent at the beginning given the NAS' iterative development.

Another theme was that neighbourhood plan contained, and by extension, that some of the resident expectations were unrealistic. It was intimated that the mismatch in expectations caused some frustration on the part of some residents. Two of the interview participants suggested that there should have been more clarity at the beginning of the planning process regarding the parameters of the plans.   Two

participants also mentioned the plans being naïve about what government can and can't do and therefore included actions that were hard for governments to action in a timely manner, if at all. Examples of unrealistic expectations included the ability of governments to make large investments in infrastructure that would serve only a small number of people such or the ability to impact broader social trends such as unemployment at the neighbourhood level. One interview subject noted this as being a concern for municipal councilors, stating that, "at times they wondered if we had created a monster," suggesting that expectations and demands were fueled through the strategy. Certainly, some of the expectations may have been a bit naïve. It is also possible that some of the perceived lack of realism didn't reflect the inability of government to act in certain areas, but rather the will to do so.

Another facet of this was that in some cases residents were interested in issues in which municipal government does not play a central role. Examples were cited of residents wanting to work on affordable housing, job creation or education. Five of the six interview subjects referenced this being a challenge with residents. One interview participant felt that residents did not fully grasp the breadth of some of their requests and noted that, "We are government and there are some things we can't do."

The interviews raise different interpretations of this. The resident concerns can be seen as unrealistic demands that don't recognize the realities of how governments work. Another is to see these requests as being political or turning into advocacy. One interview subject stated that, "Housing issues are real, there is an affordability problem

that is having a deleterious effect on low-income tenants in these neighbourhoods. That issue really started to gain some momentum." The interview participant went on to say that this issue was seen by the leadership of the NAS as advocacy and too controversial and was to be avoided. The same interview subject noted that "If you start out trying to respond to Code Red, but you just want to do nice things in neighbourhoods, then these things come around and you can't run away from it." Three of the interview subjects suggested that this should have been anticipated as a logical outcome of using a resident-led or co-production approach. Once residents were asked how things could be different and trusted that their voice mattered, they articulated what was most important to them.

All the interview subjects recognized this tension. Some saw NAS leadership as having a limited tolerance for the controversy generated by neighbourhood residents desire to engage with these broader issues. One participant indicated that, "The city is a little less tolerant of tough stuff that can come. Governments, municipal governments, need to figure out how to do this but adjust their tolerance for the challenges that might arise." Others identified this as inappropriate or misguided advocacy on the part of residents. The sense was that the raw social activism was going to do more harm than good.

The community development workers in the community to support the neighbourhood residents in planning were described as being at the center of this tension. They were an official part of the NAS infrastructure and were seen by both institutional partners

and residents as "their people." The community development workers were largely funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation which gave them some independence from the City. While they were not employed by the City, they did have a unique status as a part of the interface between the City and the residents. The community development workers were charged with helping implement the resident-led approach to working in the neighbourhoods and actively promoted that the plans belonged to the residents. As part of the interface between residents and the City bureaucracy, they heard very directly from residents about what was important to them and attempted to translate that into bureaucratic action. One interview subject described the community developers as being put in an "untenable position," indicating it was very hard for them to balance these different perspectives. In some instances, residents looked to community developers to be on their side which had to be balanced against the need to interpret bureaucratic process.   At times, the community development workers were perceived to swing too far toward the community interests. An interview subject described a situation in which a community development worker joined residents in protesting municipal policy at City Hall. The interview subject went on to say, "And I think we had some CDs and residents who fancied themselves as revolutionaries and who thought this was going to be the chance to do that." The interview subjects differed in their opinion of where to draw the line on the community development worker role. The structure of the community developer role changed two times during the course of the strategy. The first restructuring of the role brought all the community development workers together under the leadership of the Social Planning and Research Council. The Community developers were previously reporting to three separate organizations

and it was felt that rates of pay and expectations should be standardized. The second time, the community developments workers were brought into the Hamilton Community Foundation as process of reviewing the NAS began.

Findings

Based on the description in council reports and the interviews, Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy was intended to be a form of co-production. While the NAS used the term "resident-led" to describe the intended approach, the interviews suggest it reflects Bovaird's (2007) definition of co-production including its focus on citizens and government both contributing resources to the delivery of public services. The term encompassed the idea that the neighbourhood plans belonged to the residents. Resident ownership of the plans was reinforced throughout the planning process and championed by the Community Development Workers.

Eleven neighbourhood plans were ultimately produced through a significant amount of engagement with residents. The plans contained a wide array of initiatives ranging from development of low-income home repair programs to park clean ups. There was agreement from all but one of the interview participants that the resident-led element did not live up to its ideal. There was common agreement about the basic idea of working with neighbourhood residents to understand needs, but all participants acknowledged that there was no clear sense at the outset of what it meant to be resident-led making it difficult to assess to what extent the NAS was intended to truly represent a form of co-production.

The fact that the roles and expectations of all parties in implementation was not fleshed out in advance also created practical challenges for the NAS. Interview participants confirmed that the initial focus was on the planning process and that many of the implementation issues were not considered initially other than in broad strokes. One of the interview participants stated that, "I think that "resident-led" language became problematic in the later phases of the NAS because we didn't really define it other than to say that the actions in the neighbourhood plan will be developed by residents for residents." Another interview participated stated that, "I think we were better holding it [resident-led] as a value rather than a practical reality. I remember the heated conversations [with someone saying] you can't keep calling this resident led if you keep telling us how this is going to be." This disconnect between citizen expectations and staff led to acrimony and to some extent, a breakdown of the relationship between staff and residents that had been built up through the planning process.

While many of the factors identified in the literature could been seen in the case study, some were not present. In terms of organizational factors, Joshi and Moore's (2004) contention that co-production often arises from capacity or governance issues was only partially supported. None of the information suggested that co-production was being used due to the lack of capacity on the part of the City of Hamilton. Neither were governance issues, as defined by Joshi and Moore, a factor as the City did not lack legitimacy to govern. If the definition of governance issues was extended to include complex policy issues with overlapping jurisdiction, then governance issues could be seen as a part of the motivation. In the case study, it was recognized that the City was

only one among many levels of government and organizations that provided services in the neighbourhoods. The original scope of the plans was not limited to services provided only by the City of Hamilton. The ability of the City and neighbourhoods to navigate this complex policy environment, however, appeared to be one of the greatest challenges.

Flagging support from senior managers and city councillors likely reflected, in part, a resistance to sharing power. Challenges giving up control was referenced in several of the interviews. Reticence to share power may also have been manifest in the two biggest inhibiters to continued co-production which were described as "unrealistic expectations" on the part of residents or residents getting political or engaging in advocacy. It is difficult to fully unpack what was meant when interview participants used these terms. It is quite possible that some of neighbourhood requests for services would be hard for a government to justify based on a small number of people being served. Some of the issues may have indeed lain outside of the control of municipal government such as housing or education over which municipal governments only have partial control. But it is not clear why municipal government was not able to work with residents to help advocate for these priorities to be addressed by other levels of government or institutions. Whether it was that the demands were excessive or that there was insufficient political will to address them, the issues created a significant challenge with which NAS leadership had to contend. In some cases, when residents did not see the progress for which the hoped, they pushed back. Based on the interviews, this response became very challenging for NAS leadership to manage both

with residents and with politicians. Ultimately, it may be an expression of challenges

power sharing with residents. One of the respondents reflected that,

> "The reality is that residents in neighbourhoods don't have any power.
> In some ways, the NAS tried to give people some of the power that the
> municipality had. It was really a drop in the bucket compared to the
> financial and legislative power the municipality has. They gave away
> the tiniest little droplet of that power."

The issue of risk aversion emerged in the case study as well. It was only mentioned by

a couple of the respondents, but it was identified as a critical issue by those who raised

it. Risk was discussed both in terms of the desire to protect the organization from risk,

but also that some staff may have felt that working so closely with residents also

created risks to their jobs. The discussion of risk is a clear expression of a lack of

incentives for staff to engage in co-production. If staff had felt that the organization

provided sufficient incentives such as using co-production as a criterion on which

performance would be evaluated positively, the risk calculation might have felt different

for staff. In this case, they were clearly lacking, although incentives were not identified

in those exact terms by respondents.

The endorsement of senior leadership was found to be supportive of the use of co-

production. The co-production approach was championed by the City Manager and

high level support was in place around the senior management table which likely made

Council approval of the process much easier. Approval was also potentially facilitated

by political factors including The Hamilton Spectator's release of the Code Red Series

and an upcoming election. The interviews did indicate that senior level support became

strained as the NAS entered the implementation phase. It was at this point that human

resources were required from senior managers and that it was identified that councillors felt pressure to support priorities that emerged from the planning process rather than their preferred initiatives.

A lack of organizational infrastructure to support co-production became problematic in the implementation of Hamilton's NAS. There was support in the form of community developers who were tasked with supporting neighbourhoods in the development of their plans and city staff were encouraged to participate in their implementation. Some key forms of organizational infrastructure were missing such as clear governance structure. Respondents noted that the NAS developed organically and that issues of governance that might arise during implementation were not thoroughly discussed. This ultimately led to conflict over expectations of how decision-making would occur. Additionally, respondents noted that civic education might have been helpful for neighbourhood participants and that more in-depth education about citizen engagement might have better prepared city staff for the challenges that would lay ahead.

A number of organizational factors were not seen in this case study. Uncertainty for public administrators regarding the outcome of the process did not come up on the interviews. It is possible that uncertainty was indeed an issue, but it was simply expressed using different language. Organizational culture, as defined by Ventriss (2016), did not come up other. None of the respondents identified a lack of a culture of experimentation and learning as being problematic.

Individual level factors were clearly identified as being important in supporting or

hindering the use of co-production in the case study. Using a resident-led or a co-

production approach was mentioned by all interview participants as reflecting a different

way of working from traditional approaches to public administration as discussed by

Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) and Bourgon (2011). This different approach was

described as exciting to some staff who engaged enthusiastically with residents. Other

staff did not see the value of working with residents which subsequently limited the

approach's effectiveness which is consistent with Voorberg et al's (2015) writing.

Interview participants noted that working so closely with residents presented conflicts

with professional identity for some staff which is reflective of Loeffler and Bovaird's

(2016) findings. This was identified as being a challenge to co-production, but did not

stop it entirely.

Conclusion

Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy was found to have been intended as a form

of co-production. It was noted that there was a lack of clarity about roles and

responsibilities at the outset and that staff and residents had different ideas of what this

might mean. Factors associated with the use of co-production were identified and

classified as relating to the organization or individual staff. This study examined the

extent to which the factors associated with co-production were present in the case

study. Many organizational factors associated with co-production were found to be

present including underlying governance issues, reticence for government to share

power, risk aversion, leadership support, a lack of incentives and organizational

infrastructure were all found to be important. Individual staff attitudes and skills were

found to be important factors supporting or hindering co-production. Several factors

identified in the literature were not found to be present in the case study. These

included limited government capacity, logistical challenges, low tolerance for uncertainty

and organizational culture of experimentation.

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