



# Why people co-produce within activation services: the necessity of motivation and trust – an investigation of selection biases in a municipal activation programme in the Netherlands

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## Abstract

Activation services that aim at re-employment of jobseekers often suffer from ‘creaming’, i.e. selecting those who have the best qualifications to re-enter the labour market. New ways of delivery, such as co-production, are supposed to be less subject to selection mechanisms. To analyse whether co-produced activation programmes suffer from selection biases, participants in a local innovative activation programme ( $n = 60$ ) were compared to non-participants ( $n = 18$ ). Participants are more motivated in general and showed higher levels of generalized, municipal and interpersonal trust. Moreover, high general motivation relates to high levels of trust and perceived control. This indicates that there is indeed a selection bias within co-produced activation programmes. Therefore, it remains uncertain whether co-production is more successful in dealing with creaming than common types of service delivery.

## Points for practitioners

Public services, in the field of activation policies for instance, are increasingly delivered in a fashion that requires more responsibility and effort from users. This study shows that such demands elicit a selection of users. Professionals dealing with co-produced services should be aware that when they choose clients they are likely to leave out vulnerable individuals. In particular, when intrinsic motivation is an important selection criterion, those who have low levels of trust and perceived control will not be involved. Consequently, seemingly inclusive strategies could in fact lead to exclusion.

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**Keywords**

activation, co-production, motivation, perceived control, selection bias, trust

**Introduction**

Today's users of public services are invited to get actively involved in the delivery of public services. This notion of co-production emphasizes partnership and collaboration and is considered to be a promising concept in providing services of better quality and in increasing service satisfaction and public trust (Verschuere et al., 2012). It is often regarded as a solution to at least some of the problems related to 'traditional' Public Administration, where clients are passive and loyal to the service provider, and to New Public Management (NPM), where clients are a consumer within a marketized arena, ideally having the ability to choose between providers, but not actively involved in the service delivery (Fledderus et al., 2014a; Torfing and Triantafyllou, 2013).

Also within the provision of activation policies, which aim to get welfare recipients back into the labour market, there is an emergent 'New Public Governance' (NPG) framework, 'characterized by a broader range of delivery actors, diverse processes of service delivery, and a greater emphasis on co-producing services in collaboration with end users' (Lindsay et al., 2014: 4). Over recent decades, however, the delivery of activation services in many European countries has been inspired by NPM. One of the problems of competition between private providers of such services has been 'creaming', i.e. selecting those who already have good qualifications in order to retain high success rates (Bruttel, 2005: 401–402). The question is: does the problem of selection disappear when activation services are based on co-production?

Two types of selection might occur. Creaming is a form of organizational selection, which might be stimulated not only by competition, but also by performance management. The second type of selection relates to the role of the jobseeker. Some welfare recipients do not want or are not able to enter activation programmes for different reasons and will therefore try to avoid getting involved. For instance, low trust in public institutions, low self-esteem, disappointing previous experiences with services or poor (mental) health might hold people back from participating.

Activation programmes provide an interesting case of co-production since they often entail a mandatory element, whereas normally, co-production is considered to be a voluntary act (Brudney and England, 1983). By the use of (the threat of) sanctions clients are compelled to collaborate and take up particular activities. Those who are unmotivated and have low self-esteem and low levels of trust might actually be reached when sanctions are used. This leads to a supplementary question: does the use of compulsion have an effect on the (possible) selection biases within activation programmes?

A recently introduced activation policy in the municipality of Nijmegen, the Netherlands, will be used as a case. This policy allows organizations,

so-called ‘work corporations’ (*werkcorporaties*), to offer work-learning programmes to social assistance recipients. They could be understood as a specific type of ‘Work Integration Social Enterprise’ (WISE) (Davister et al., 2004). In the next section, we will first briefly introduce activation services and co-production. Moving on from there, self-selection and organizational selection will be explained. Then, the case, methods and sample are described. The results of a comparative survey study are presented in turn, and the article concludes with the implications of the findings.

## Policy background

Activation services are expected to promote ‘the (more or less obligatory) participation of people dependent on unemployment benefits or social assistance in work’ (Van Berkel and Borghi, 2008: 332). Activation programmes could help to minimize the marginalizing effects of unemployment – such as a decline in social contacts, well-being, agency, perceived control and trust (Andersen, 2008; Fryer, 1997; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). In the field of activation policies, there is increasingly room for interagency cooperation, the involvement of third sectors and social innovation (Van Berkel and De Graaf, 2011). Municipalities more often cooperate with non-profit and/or voluntary organizations, a trend that can be witnessed in other countries too, such as the UK (Lindsay et al., 2008) and Denmark (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2009). These collaborative partnerships are believed to be less focused on competition, and are supposed to emphasize the role of users as co-producers.

Let us clarify what we mean by co-production of activation services. There are at least two interpretations of co-production (Porter, 2012). The first is that there are services which cannot be effectively produced without some involvement of the user. Education and activation services are examples of such inherent, inescapable co-production (Alford, 2009). In the second usage, user input is added to enhance qualities and quantities of a public service. In this article, we acknowledge the first interpretation of the concept of co-production, but we will use the second as our definition: although activation will never work without some involvement from users, there are different ways to deliver such services. According to our view, there is co-production when users are *actively* engaged in the delivery of the activation service. In WISEs, such active participation is required because users need to cover the expenses for their own re-employment through productive activities. Through these activities, they generate income, which is used to deliver the activation service. In this sense, users become co-producers of their own service.

The involvement of non-profit organizations on the one hand and engaging users as co-producers in the delivery of activation services on the other hand have both been related to democratization and inclusion, often by contrasting them with market solutions (Pestoff, 2009). The question is, however, whether activation programmes in which users co-produce are indeed better able to achieve

social inclusion. Two selection mechanisms might still be in place: self-selection and organizational selection. In the following section, the concepts needed to understand these mechanisms are introduced.

## Theoretical background

### *Self-selection*

Not everybody is eager to join activation programmes – especially when they require a lot of effort and dedication, as might be the case when users are considered to be co-producers. There could be clear circumstances which restrict a person's participation, for instance when someone's health is poor or when a sick child needs to be taken care of. Such factors relate to people's *capabilities and resources*. However, there are also other factors which could determine participation, such as motivation, trust and perceived control (consisting of self-esteem, self-efficacy and internal control), which will be described below.

### *Motivations*

Motivation to co-produce can be *extrinsic* or *intrinsic*. If motivations are based on the expectation of material rewards or punishment from an external party (such as cutting one's benefit), one needs to speak of extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the idea that somebody participates in certain activities because he or she finds the activities themselves interesting, worthwhile and enjoyable (Deci, 1972).

Next to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, *sociality* might also be a motivation to get involved. This refers to the pleasure of associating with others: 'people may contribute even if it disadvantages them financially, because they enjoy the company, fellowship and esteem of others' (Alford, 2009: 27). Especially for people without a job, gaining social contacts could be an important driver. Finally, people may participate out of *normative* considerations, which may also conflict with material self-interest. Alford (2009) gives the example of a rich person supporting progressive taxation out of a sense of fairness. Similarly, when people receive welfare benefits, they might find it appropriate to do something in return for this allowance.

Whereas extrinsic motivations are often found in simpler, transactional services, more complex or relational services also require intrinsic motivation. Since co-produced activation programmes consist of enduring and demanding activities, it is likely that selection occurs on the part of the welfare recipients. Those who are only motivated by rewards (or sanctions), and not by their desire for a new job, will not take part in these programmes as readily as those who are eager to become employable.

### *Trust and perceived control*

Trust is recognized as one of the key conditions for collaboration (Yamagishi and Cook, 1993). People with low levels of trust in (local) government and/or the

service provider will probably be less convinced by the benefits of the programme than individuals who have high levels of trust. This relates to the perception of external efficacy: 'is the service able to help me?' (Calzada and del Pino, 2008). Moreover, when the programme involves working together with a group of participants, having trust in fellow citizens (generalized trust) may also be an important precondition.

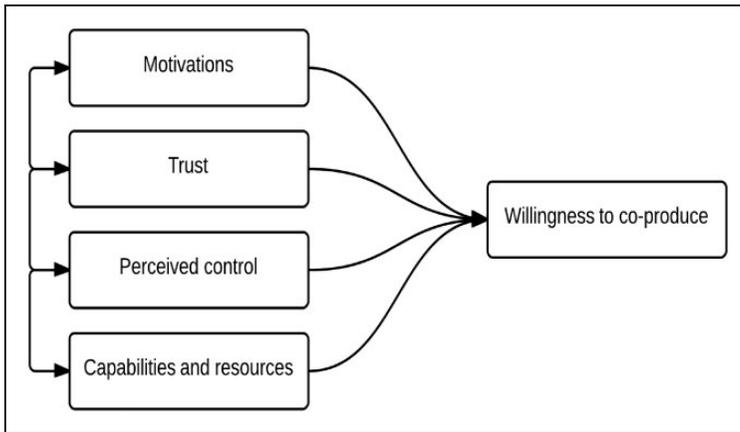
Furthermore, perceiving control over one's life will increase the chance of participation. Being happy about yourself (self-esteem), thinking that your actions (such as joining an activation programme) have positive consequences (self-efficacy) and thinking that re-employment is the result of hard work rather than luck (internal control) all contribute to this feeling of perceived control (Skinner, 1995). The expectation of success greatly determines the likelihood of engaging in a particular behaviour (Feather, 1992). Therefore, people who feel incapable of changing their situation will be less inclined to search for a job, and therefore will show little job-searching behaviour (Taris, 2002). Or, to put it another way: because people with a high sense of control tend to select challenging tasks (Bandura, 1989), they are more likely to get involved in activation programmes.

Hence, activation programmes are likely to suffer from self-selection. However, it is conceivable that organizational selection plays a role too.

### *Organizational selection*

Creaming refers to the practice of selecting the most qualified candidates for participation in order to increase programme success (Van Berkel, 2010: 30). This includes selecting on so-called 'hard' characteristics, such as educational background, language proficiency and work experience, but it could also involve 'soft' characteristics, such as social skills, appearance and motivation. It is thought that creaming is especially a risk when contracting out services to private companies (Van Berkel and Van der Aa, 2005). The process underlying this phenomenon could be described as market segmentation. Firms identify what the main demographic and psychographic characteristics of potential clients are and differentiate according to customer segments (Fountain, 2001: 13). Creaming is believed to be stimulated when fierce accountability measures are in place. The effective spending of resources on activation services is increasingly managed by the use of performance targets (Van Berkel, 2010). Thus, activation services are often evaluated on the basis of their capacity to increase labour market participation. A lack of effectiveness will result in a weak position in tendering. Hence, to reduce this uncertainty, organizations could try to influence the composition of their clientele. Market segmentation and a focus on output lead to a propensity to help those clients who are the easiest to serve, which could bring about a selection of individuals with not only greater capabilities and resources, but also 'soft' characteristics such as motivation, trust and perceived control.

Scholars suggest that network governance will make creaming less of an issue (Van Berkel, 2010: 30). This assumption seems to relate to the inclusion of



**Figure 1.** Selection mechanisms

non-profit organizations in the delivery of activation services. These organizations are expected to be less occupied with individualistic behaviour, competition and outputs, and more with human development and holistic approaches to social integration (Lindsay et al., 2014). What is neglected, however, is that network governance often demands more from service users. The more organizations depend on the efforts of their clients – which are difficult to control – the more motivation becomes important. Moreover, in practice, performance indicators and targets are nowadays widely used for monitoring the output of local service providers – not only within marketized arenas (Van Berkel, 2010). Consequently, within network governance too, selection could occur.

Coercive measures, however, seem to counteract creaming. Activation programmes often include mandatory elements (Dingeldey, 2007). Using coercion implies that everybody should do their best to become job-ready, and there are few (or no) excuses. People who do not participate in work-first programmes or work-learn activities are considered ‘unwilling’, and should therefore have no right to privileges such as benefits. There are several reasons to make use of (the threat of) sanctioning. It can be used as a gate-keeping function when the workload is high (Lipsky, 1980). Sanctions can also be employed to make clients comply with the rules and to collaborate, and to ‘control’ the motivation of clients (Thorén, 2005). In this way, the use of force and obligation might actually help to reach those people who have little motivation, low trust and low perceived control. Hence, there could be a link between being motivated because of the threat of sanctions and/or because somebody told you to do so, and general motivation, trust and perceived control.

To summarize, self-selection and organizational selection potentially play a role within co-production. As a consequence, the participants in activation programmes could be those citizens who have sufficient capabilities and resources, who are already highly motivated, and who have high levels of trust and perceived control.

Using force might involve those who are not motivated and have both low levels of trust and little perceived control.

Figure 1 illustrates four possible variables which could be related to organizational and self-selection. In order to investigate the model, a particular activation programme in a Dutch municipality is used as a case study, which suits an analysis of selection biases in the four concepts, but also illustrates the relationship between extrinsic motivation, general motivation, trust and perceived control.

### **Case: work corporations**

In the summer of 2011, several work corporations started operating in the municipality of Nijmegen, a middle-sized city in the Netherlands (see Fledderus et al., 2014b). These work corporations aim at reemploying social assistance recipients at a considerable distance from the labour market by offering work, guidance and education. They can be best understood as a specific type of WISEs (Davister et al., 2004). Davister et al. (2004: 3) define WISEs as ‘autonomous economic entities whose main objective is the professional integration – within the WISE itself or in mainstream enterprises – of people experiencing serious difficulties in the labour market. This integration is achieved through productive activity and tailored follow-up, or through training to qualify the workers.’ Across Europe, more than 50 types of WISE have been identified (Nyssens, 2014). They differ in the way their participants are integrated, but also in financial structure, resources and objectives. What are the assets of work corporations?

Work corporations are entirely run by the beneficiaries under supervision, often with the support of professionals. The revenue earned by the participants is directly invested in the organizational costs of the work corporation. Thus, we can speak of a co-produced activation programme: without the efforts of the participants, the work corporation would not exist.

Work corporations have clear objectives: they should aim at personal development; the service or product delivered should have societal relevance (which may be interpreted broadly); and a work corporation should be able to be self-sufficient in the long term. The main goal of the programme is to get into a paid job within two years at the most.

The municipality takes care of recruiting participants, i.e. determining who is eligible to join. It also provides the facilities required for the re-employment programme and monitors the output target (in terms of outflow of clients). The work corporation’s functions include: having final responsibility for the selection of participants (they may reject participants for any reason); creating a personal re-employment programme/development plan for the participant; guiding the participant during the development process; and providing education/training.

Beneficiaries can enter a work corporation in several ways. They can apply voluntarily by applying for vacancies, with or without the help of their job coach. The majority, however, have been summoned to join a so-called job market, where they visit stands of different work corporations, and afterwards

have to fill in a form to request an interview with one of them. Welfare recipients are threatened with sanctions when they do not show up at the job market. Whether these sanctions are actually applied is at the discretion of the client's job coach. Indeed, clients have been punished for not participating in the job market. Nevertheless, when beneficiaries do show up and apply, they have the right to decline the job at the work corporation without being sanctioned. However, this is not something that is stressed by the municipality and, indeed, it turns out that there are quite a number of participants who believe that they must participate in order to maintain the right to benefits.

When participants start working, they have to sign a contract where their rights and obligations are formulated; this also includes the fact that they could be sanctioned. Hence, participants could be extrinsically motivated by the threat of sanctions or by the persuasion of their job coach; but they could also be motivated by the content of the programme, by the social features of the service or because they feel morally obliged.

To date (March 2013), 45 work corporations have emerged, of which 13 have more than five participants. Most of the work corporations investigated have their origins in delivering publicly funded non-profit services. For example, in one work corporation participants cook and serve food in a restaurant in combination with lower secondary vocational education; another guides participants who do maintenance in neighbourhoods; and a third work corporation is a furniture and decoration shop where people learn to work as a vendor.

## Method and data

### *Data*

The present study draws upon survey data retrieved from participants in seven of the 13 larger work corporations in the municipality of Nijmegen. The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study using existing items about *motivations* (Alford, 2009), *trust* (Reeskens and Hooghe, 2008), *perceived control* (Scholz et al., 2002) and *capabilities and resources*. To determine how we could adapt some of the items to suit the purpose of our study we interviewed the policy adviser of the municipality and the project leaders of the work corporations. Cognitive interviewing was applied, including thinking aloud and retrospective probing (Willis, 2005), to five participants with different (ethnic) backgrounds to test whether they could understand the questionnaire. The final version was approved by all work corporation managers.

## Measures

### *Motivations*

To account for the variety of motivations and potential combination of motivational factors to participate in an activation programme, items regarding general

and specific motivations in the questionnaire were included. One question addressed the participant's general motivation to participate in the programme on a scale from 1 to 4 ('did not like to participate (at all)' to '(very) much like to participate'). Based on Alford's (2009) distinction of motivations, context-specific statements were developed with which respondents could disagree (completely) (1, 2), neither agree nor disagree (3) or agree (completely) (4, 5). This included intrinsic motivations ('the work I have to do is interesting'), outcome-related benefits (getting a job or education), sociality ('I want to have more contact with others'), normative motivations ('people receiving benefits have to do something'), and extrinsic motivations based on compulsion ('somebody told me I had to participate'; 'I was afraid my benefits would be stopped').

### *Trust*

Two broad types of trust are distinguished: *particularized* trust, which is aimed at a particular person, organization or institution, such as neighbours, (local) government or the service provider; and *generalized* trust, i.e. trust in people in general, or strangers. Respondents were asked to rate these forms of trust giving a number ranging from 0 to 10. Principal component analysis shows a clear distinction between those persons close to the respondent (neighbours, people in the neighbourhood and other participants) and organizations at a distance (government and the political system). Trust in managers of the work corporation and the municipality of Nijmegen double-loaded on these two dimensions, indicating that these fit neither the personal nor the abstract category. Therefore, these were kept as manifest variables. The mean for the 'interpersonal' factor was calculated (neighbours, people in the neighbourhood and other participants), which reported an alpha of .82. The same was done for trust in the political system and government (Pearson's  $r$  0.88).

For the measurement of generalized trust, a three-item scale was used (Reeskens and Hooghe, 2008). Again, the items were simplified to comply with the language proficiency of the population. The questions were phrased in the following way: 'Are most people to be trusted or do you think most people are not to be trusted?', 'Do you think most people are honest or are most people dishonest?', 'Do you think people help each other often or do you think people only think about themselves?' Respondents could choose a 10 for thinking people are completely to be trusted, honest and helpful and a 0 for the opposite. The scale's alpha was .84 and the mean was determined.

### *Perceived control*

Three constructs measured perceived control: self-efficacy, self-esteem and locus of control. These three are considered to be core self-evaluations and actually part of a broad personality trait (Judge et al., 2002). Self-efficacy refers to the belief in the effectiveness of one's actions. Self-esteem entails the overall value one places on

oneself as a person. Locus of control can be divided into internal and external control. 'Internals' believe they can influence many things that happen to them, whereas 'externals' feel events occur as a result of fate or luck.

*Self-efficacy.* Three items from the validated GSE scale (Scholz et al., 2002) were slightly adapted to increase the comprehensiveness. Respondents had to say whether they '(not at all) agree' (1, 2) or '(completely) agree' (3, 4) to propositions such as 'I have a solution for most problems when I try.' The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .65 and a mean was computed to construct the latent variable.

*Self-esteem.* The measurement of self-esteem was based on the validated Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Franck et al., 2008). From the original ten items, three items were selected and adapted slightly, involving questions such as 'I feel satisfied with myself'. Response options again ranged from 1 '(not at all) agree' to 4 '(completely) agree'. The alpha of the scale was .64 and again means were calculated.

*Locus of control.* Spector's (1988) Work Locus of Control Scale was used as model for a context-specific measurement of locus of control. Two items dealt with the extent to which people feel their job search is affected by their own actions: 'If I work hard (at the work corporation), I will find a job later on' and 'If I make enough effort (at the work corporation), I am likely to find a job later on.' The variable 'internal locus of control' consists of the mean of these two items (4-point scale).

### *Capabilities and resources*

To measure capabilities and resources, perceived health (1 = very bad to 5 = very good), number of social contacts ('how many people do you have contact with outside the work corporation on a regular base', 0-3, 4-9 or 10 or more persons), duration of unemployment (in years), and country of birth (the Netherlands, outside the Netherlands) were measured.

### **Sample**

Seven work corporations were selected for the sample. The selection criteria were: a minimum size of five participants; and comparability in terms of internal organization (for instance, participants should have been working at the organization for at least one year). Furthermore, only those who had just started (for no more than four weeks) working in the period from September 2012 to January 2013 were invited to complete the survey. All of them ( $n=60$ ) completed and returned the questionnaire.

A control group was set up to compare the results of the participants with non-participants. This group consists of participants who did apply for a work corporation, but did not start working there. This ensured that the same population

(in terms of eligibility) was addressed. A €10 voucher was promised for taking the time to fill in the survey. Of the 100 surveys that were sent to members of the control group, 20 were returned, of which two could not be used because one was working at a work corporation and the other had a job already. The low response rate might be due to a lack of interest in the survey topic (what is in it for me?) and distrust in the intentions of the survey (although it was anonymous). This would imply that the control group consists of a selective group of non-participants, with higher levels of trust than the actual population.

This is supported by the reasons given by the respondents for their non-participation. It appears that most of them actually did like the work at the work corporation. This seems to point to organizational selection. Indeed, the majority (11 of 18) noted that either there was no vacancy at that time ( $n=7$ ); they were told that they did not suit the profile ( $n=2$ ); or that they had not been called back by the work corporation ( $n=2$ ). The other responses could be linked to self-selection (7 of 18). For instance, three mentioned that they would not get a paid job anyway, and another wrote that he thought work corporations were 'a form of exploitation'. Two mentioned that they could not combine it with care of their children, and another two said that the work was physically too demanding.

It should be noted that this control group does not involve those who chose not to attend the job market or those who did not apply at all, even though they were familiar with the programme. The size of the first group is known. Fifty-six percent (233) of the 413 social assistance recipients that were invited to the job market did not turn up. A proportion of this group might have had good reasons why they could not attend: 35 percent (82) had let the municipality know that they were unable to come – this might have been due to health or having to take care of others. The remainder, however, had not – and this might have been due to a lack of motivation. Thus, a fairly large self-selection has already taken place before jobseekers apply to the work corporation. This means that we do not have a complete view of the self-selection mechanism.

## Results

### *Descriptive analysis*

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of the participants and the control group. Compared to all those receiving social assistance in Nijmegen (in 2011), there was a slight overrepresentation of men (55 percent compared to 48 percent). Fifty-three percent were born in another country, which does not differ much from the average in the population. The participants generally stated that they were in good health (average 3.77). There was an overrepresentation of women in the control group, although the composition did not differ significantly from the participants' group. The average age of the control group was slightly higher than the participants (45 versus 41). Most statistics which measure capabilities and resources (born in another country, social contacts, perceived health and duration of

**Table 1.** Background characteristics

	Participants ( <i>n</i> = 60)	Control group ( <i>n</i> = 18)
Women (%)	45	67
Men (%)	55	33
Age (average in years)	41	45
Country of birth: Netherlands (%)	47	65
Country of birth: foreign (%)	53	35
Duration of unemployment: two years or less (%)	48	39
Duration of unemployment: more than two years (%)	52	61
Perceived health: (very) good (%)	62	59
Perceived health: (very) bad, not good/not bad (%)	38	41
Social contacts: 0–3 (%)	33	50
Social contacts: 4–9 (%)	37	33
Social contacts: 10 or more (%)	30	17

**Table 2.** Motivations of participants and control group

Motivations	Participants ( <i>n</i> = 60)		Control group ( <i>n</i> = 18)	
	Low (%)	High (%)	Low (%)	High (%)
General motivation	8	92	22	78
Getting a job	18	82	13	88
Work is interesting	27	73	40	60
Getting a diploma	28	72	53	47
More contact with others	22	78	40	60
People on benefits have to do something	28	72	33	67
Afraid of losing benefits	60	40	71	29
Somebody told me to	79	21	79	21

unemployment) also hold more or less the same values between the groups. Hence, non-participation cannot be explained by factors that relate to capabilities or resources of clients.

Table 2 presents the motivations of the participants and control group. The original five-item scale has been dichotomized for presentation, where low stands for the lowest three categories (1, 2, 3) and high for the two highest (4, 5). It seems that the general motivation of participants is very high. Ninety-two percent state that they (very) much liked to begin at the work corporation. Only five of the

**Table 3.** Trust and perceived control; means of participants and control group

	Participants ( <i>n</i> = 60)	Control group ( <i>n</i> = 18)
<i>Trust</i>		
Generalized trust	6.60 (1.97)	5.26 (2.39)*
Interpersonal trust	6.56 (1.92)	4.22 (2.53)*
Trust in work corporation	7.98 (2.10)	–
Trust in municipality	6.73 (2.52)	5.56 (2.55)†
Trust in government and politics	4.25 (2.93)	3.97 (2.83)
<i>Perceived control</i>		
Self-efficacy	3.31 (0.57)	3.13 (0.43)
Self-esteem	3.47 (0.48)	3.37 (0.53)
Internal locus of control	3.30 (0.58)	2.97 (0.76)†

\* $p < .05$ , † $p < .10$ ; SD in parentheses.

60 respondents said they were not eager to participate. Not surprisingly, almost all participants applied because they wanted to get a job after the project (82 percent). Obtaining a diploma was also a main motivation for the majority (72 percent). Another reason mentioned often was getting in contact with others (78 percent). Hence, sociality was very important for most participants. This also suggests that many participants felt socially excluded as a result of being unemployed. Fewer respondents mentioned that the content of the work itself was an important motivator (73 percent). More or less the same number agreed that their participation had to do with normative reasons: people on benefits have to do something (72 percent).

Only 40 percent said they were afraid of cutbacks to their benefits. Twenty-one percent indicated that they had joined because someone said they had to. Hence, only a minority participated because of external pressure. Interestingly, participants were motivated by different factors simultaneously. Even most of the respondents who indicated that there was external pressure nevertheless found the work interesting (65.2 percent of people working because of fears of ending benefits; 71.4 percent of people participating because somebody told them to). Still, participants indicating that there were no external motivations more often stated that they joined because they thought the job was interesting (78.6 percent and 77.4 percent, respectively). This supports the crowding-out hypothesis, although the differences are not marked. In general, participants were highly intrinsically motivated.

Strikingly, perceived control was high among participants (Table 3). On a 4-point scale, the mean of self-efficacy was 3.31, that of self-esteem 3.47 and that of internal locus of control 3.30. This suggests that a typical group of users had

indeed entered work corporations. The means of generalized trust and interpersonal trust were 6.60 and 6.56. These figures are relatively high: in the European Social Survey (ESS), the average generalized trust of Dutch unemployed individuals looking for a job is 5.4.<sup>1</sup> Trust in government and politics was more similar to the average found in the ESS (4.25 compared to 4.50).<sup>2</sup> Trust in the work corporation was very high (7.98), whereas trust in the municipality was somewhat lower (6.73).

### *Comparison with control group*

It appears that the non-participants were less motivated in general than the participants, when comparing the original 5-point scales (Mann-Whitney U 376.5,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>3</sup> This supports the expectation that intrinsic motivation is required to participate in co-production. Participants also seemed to be more motivated by the prospect of getting a diploma (Mann-Whitney U 303.5,  $p < .05$ ), but there were no differences regarding the other reasons for joining the programme. This could mean that non-participants were not looking for a long-term investment, but for quick solutions to their precarious situation.

Differences were also found in the levels of interpersonal trust (Mann-Whitney U 247.5,  $p < .05$ ), municipal trust (Mann-Whitney U 392.5,  $p < .10$ ) and generalized trust (Mann-Whitney U 336.0,  $p < .05$ ), which were all higher for participants than non-participants (Table 3). The level of trust in government and politics was the same for both groups. The internal locus of control was somewhat higher for participants than for non-participants (Mann-Whitney U 372.0,  $p < .10$ ). Yet, there were no significant differences between the two groups in relation to self-efficacy and self-esteem, whereas it was expected that this would be lower among the control group.

As stated above, because the group of non-participants was small and the non-response rate fairly high, there might be another selection effect (i.e. a particular group of non-participants completed the survey). Nevertheless, one would expect that, in particular, people with low levels of trust and perceived control would not respond to the survey. In fact, this would suggest that levels of trust and perceived control might be even lower among non-participants than found here.

Apparently, there is a selection bias concerning trust and motivation. Does this mean that selection on motivation also leads to selection on trust? And does the use of extrinsic motivators help to involve those who have low levels of trust? To compare levels of trust among poorly and highly motivated individuals, the variable general motivation was in this case dichotomized between highly motivated ('very much like to participate') and the other three levels ('did not like to participate (at all)' and 'like to participate'), to create comparable groups. This time, the data of the participants and non-participants were combined, as we were now interested in the statistical relations between the variables, rather than the differences between the two groups.

**Table 4.** Trust, perceived control and motivations ( $n = 78$ )

	General motivation		Afraid of ending benefits		Somebody told me to	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
<i>Trust</i>						
Generalized trust	6.18 (2.22)	6.57 (1.93)	6.47 (2.12)	6.28 (1.91)	6.65 (2.07)	6.67 (2.07)
Interpersonal trust	5.68 (2.27)	6.83 (2.15)*	6.16 (2.23)	5.85 (1.85)	6.22 (2.15)	6.17 (2.04)
Trust in work corporation	7.48 (2.28)	8.95 (1.28)*	7.97 (2.05)	7.68 (2.25)	7.98 (1.98)	8.25 (2.22)
Trust in municipality	5.98 (2.44)	7.63 (2.52)*	6.44 (2.24)	6.31 (2.65)	6.52 (2.34)	6.80 (2.93)
Trust in government and political system	3.81 (2.80)	5.13 (2.96)†	3.88 (2.47)	4.02 (3.20)	4.19 (2.69)	4.17 (3.60)
<i>Perceived control</i>						
Self-efficacy	3.20 (0.54)	3.44 (0.54)	3.29 (0.53)	3.16 (0.57)	3.31 (0.53)	3.13 (0.65)
Self-esteem	3.38 (0.50)	3.62 (0.44)*	3.47 (0.51)	3.35 (0.48)	3.46 (0.48)	3.38 (0.57)
Internal locus of control	3.11 (0.60)	3.50 (0.62)*	3.22 (0.69)	3.23 (0.53)	3.21 (0.65)	3.27 (0.56)

\* $p < .05$ , † $p < .10$ ; SD in parentheses;  $n = 60$  for trust in work corporation.

### *Relation between motivations, trust and perceived control*

Clearly, those who are highly motivated have higher levels of trust than less-motivated participants, except for generalized trust (Mann-Whitney U tests, see Table 4). Thus, if organizations pick out only highly motivated persons, they will also select high trusters.

Individuals that are (highly) motivated by being afraid of having their benefits stopped were compared to those who did not state that this was an important reason to join. Regardless of the type of trust, there were no differences between the two groups. Likewise, individuals who said that they joined because somebody told them to do so did not have lower levels of trust than those who did not. Hence, using extrinsic motivators does not seem to attract participants with lower trust.

Regarding differences in perceived control regarding motivations, high general motivation appeared to be related to high perceived control (Mann-Whitney U tests, see Table 4). Levels of self-esteem and internal locus of control were higher for individuals who were highly generally motivated compared to less-motivated beneficiaries. Again, extrinsic motivations do not relate to perceived control, and do not counteract the selection bias under scrutiny.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

In this article we have investigated whether there is a selection bias within co-produced activation programmes. Background characteristics relating to the resources and capabilities of people, such as health, social contacts and ethnicity,

do not seem to determine whether people co-produce within work corporations or not. However, participants in work corporations have much more trust in their fellow citizens (in the neighbourhood), more trust in the municipality, more trust in people in general, and are intrinsically motivated to a higher extent than those who do not participate. This result, which resembles findings in the field of civic participation, is important since activation policies, and co-production in general, are expected to be beneficial in combating marginalization and fostering social cohesion (Anderson, 2009; Breidahl and Clement, 2010). If levels of trust are already high, this proposition would not be impossible, but difficult to achieve in practice.

The result that municipal trust is an important precondition for participation in the programme implies that public officials (in the Netherlands the so-called 'client manager') benefit from gaining trust from clients if they want them to become engaged in activation programmes. This is underlined by the finding that (municipal) trust relates to general motivation to join work corporations.

We also found that extrinsic motivations such as being afraid of cutbacks in one's benefits and being told to participate are not negatively related to trust and perceived control. Users who have been obliged by the municipality to apply for a work corporation nevertheless seem to be enthusiastic about the work corporation programme. People might need some persuasion to be convinced of participation. For some, the pressure from the municipality to apply for a work corporation can be harmonized with their own norms that one has to do something in return for benefits, or with the wish to find a job. Others might perceive initiatives such as work corporations as good opportunities for increasing their chances of securing a regular job, even though they are mandatory.

Although it might be regarded as positive that extrinsic motivators do not necessarily affect the relation between the user and the municipality and work corporation in terms of trust, we can also conclude that they are unable to counter the selection biases that occur within co-produced activation services. Thus, the question remains whether co-production is an effective strategy to engage vulnerable citizens.

Biased participation within co-production may be a problem for activation services, but this does not necessarily have to be the case for other public sectors. Take, for example, participants in a neighbourhood watch programme who are actively involved in combating crime. As volunteers might be exposed to confrontations with suspects, selection on certain criteria might be necessary. It is likely and understandable that those who are responsible for selecting participants (e.g. police officers, public officials) will pick out willing, intrinsically motivated and cooperative citizens to join the neighbourhood watch. Likewise, in the case of health care, it is not unlikely that a doctor will refrain from giving a patient room to get involved in the treatment if he or she thinks this patient lacks particular skills (e.g. because of mental disabilities). In these cases, selection might actually improve the outcome (safety, health) for disadvantaged individuals too.

But if we seek an inclusive approach and try to reach those groups who are at a distance from public services and government, we also need to know how to mobilize the less willing. This study has shown that participants in activation

programmes are often motivated by several reasons simultaneously. Therefore, it will be difficult to determine which instruments could be used to overcome the selection bias. To complicate matters even further, it is probable that users within different sectors might have other motivations than participants in co-produced activation programmes. Within activation programmes, the outcome is mainly private value, whereas in other cases the outcome could also be group or public value (Alford, 2014). Parents who participate in child care also produce value (high quality child care) for other parents. Residents who join a neighbourhood watch also produce value (neighbourhood safety) for other residents. Citizens can be motivated by individual and collective benefits simultaneously too. For example, tenants of social housing cooperatives co-produce because they enjoy the social contact, but also because they are able to rent at advantageous prices (Brandsen and Helderma, 2012). Comparative research across different sectors is needed to gain more insight into the process of motivating people to co-produce.

In the end, the key actors who are able to motivate users to co-produce are the front-line professionals. They are able to influence how clients perceive the service offered, and therefore their willingness to participate (Alford, 2009). The various reasons why users co-produce, shown by this study, illustrate how difficult it is to design accessible and successful co-produced services.

## Notes

1. Authors' calculations; the same three-item construct was used to measure generalized trust.
2. Authors' calculations; mean of 'trust in parliament' and 'trust in politicians'.
3. Mann-Whitney U was used because of non-normal distribution of variables in the control group.

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