Co-creation and the State in a Global Context

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Introduction

Co-creation narratives are gaining global currency with initiatives and governments around the world increasingly using the term to label their activities across very different contexts, in an example of what McCann and Ward (2011) refer to as 'policy mobility'. This chapter critically explores the implications of this in two ways. Firstly, by drawing on debates about the need for theory to 'see from the South' (Watson, 2009), it discusses whether existing definitions and conceptualisations of co-creation, which tend to come from the Global North, can adequately characterise and understand the experience of the Global South. Such debates overlap with decolonial approaches seeking to challenge the geopolitics of knowledge production, which are of particular relevance to considerations of co-creation (see for example Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2007). We therefore ask the question is co-creation a colonising concept or can it be explored in ways which break down dichotomies and change relations between the Global North and South as well as addressing other examples of marginalisation and exclusion?

Secondly, it focuses on the relationship between co-creation and the state as a way of illustrating these debates in more depth. In liberal democracies, the ideal of co-creation sees communities and the state working together in addressing inequalities, allowing voices to be heard, providing emancipatory potential and thus changing the relationship between the state and its publics. But as Pritchard's (2017) critique among others points out, in both the Global North and South, such initiatives can be co-opted by the state and other agencies as a way of devolving responsibilities, implementing growth-oriented urban agendas and organising voluntary effort leading to the potential co-option of groups and initiatives into a restrictive narrative of co-creation. In other more extreme cases, an oppressive and militarised state can close down spaces of co-creation. How do projects and communities navigate these differing contexts and what forms of co-creation emerge within them?

These questions are significant ones for a project that brings together partners from the Global North and South, but the origins of which could arguably be seen as adding to the colonisation of urban theory and practice. This chapter will address them by drawing on relevant literature and exploring the views and experience of participants in co-creative practices gathered in a series of in-depth interviews with four local stakeholders directly involved in the H2020 Co-Creation case studies in Brazil, and Mexico, and an additional three academics from these countries working in related fields. The questions are aimed at capturing the implications of differing contexts and local conceptualisations, exploring co-creation as an emerging concept in conversation with the partners of the project beyond the term Co-Creation as defined in the introduction of this book. It also brings in material and discussions held at three conferences organised by the project in Berlin, Rio and Mexico City. The discussion is, therefore, largely restricted to the countries participating in the project but we hope that this will raise debates and issues with a wider remit.

Seeing from the South

The phrase 'Seeing from the South' was popularised in a 2009 article by South African planner Vanessa Watson (Watson, 2009). The article was part of a growing body of work which questioned the ability of the urban theory 'canon' to fully understand and explain the urban experience in the Global South, given such theory was based largely on the experience of major Western cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles. Not only is this seen as an example, for some, of the colonisation of knowledge and the exclusion of some voices in favour of others, but also as resulting in theory which cannot explain southern cities, much less support calls for interventions within them. Watson was joined by other writers such as Ananya Roy (2011) (writing largely about the Asian experience) and Jennifer Robinson (2013) (Africa) in calling for urban studies and urban theory to be re-oriented and transformed by taking on board the knowledge and experiences of the Global South. This, they asserted, would produce different arguments and concepts, and include different voices from 'traditional hegemonic theory' which, as a result, can be seen as provincial rather than global. We are aware that there are other dimensions than the geopolitics of north-south distinctions to these critiques, particularly articulations with relations of race, gender and sexuality (Lugones, 2007). However, we focus here on 'seeing from the South'. The implications of this for a concept such as co-creation are twofold. Firstly, is it merely yet another example of a concept from the North, which is imposed on the South, or secondly (and from a more nuanced perspective) what are the implications of the differing contexts in which co-creation occurs for how the concept can be theorised and understood.

What/where is the Global South?

Before exploring these questions further, it is important to understand what we mean by the term 'the Global South'. Like co-creation, the term is itself contested. Its origins lie in the Brandt report of 1980 which sought to move away from the 'third world' label and shift global debates from a focus on east/west. Nevertheless, Roy (2014) has questioned the subsequent construction of the Global South as the location of underdevelopment. She notes that initiatives such as participatory action research (PAR), movements for rights to the city, participatory budgeting, etc. show that new formations are occurring in southern cities meaning the South cannot be seen as a 'stable ontological category symbolising subalternity' (p.15) but instead should be seen as a source of innovation. Previously, (Roy, 2005) she has called for informality to be recognised as a form of urbanisation in its own right rather as something apart from 'formal', i.e. real, urbanisation. Miraftab and Kudva (2015) recognise the dangers of essentialism and hierarchies associated with the term the Global South, but argue for an understanding of the term that 'emphasise(s) a shared heritage of recent colonial histories in the global peripheries…combined with Post WWII experience of development to "alleviate" poverty',p.4.

Mabin (2014) (also writing from South Africa) sees a dual situation of post-coloniality and a particular political economic situation in which there is a condition of scarcity for the majority as southern 'conditions'. It is, above all he argues, a relational not a geographical term. However, he also cautions against a focus on 'seeing from the South' which sets up new dichotomies and hierarchies and could potentially repeat the exclusion it is trying to overcome. He and others have questioned the usefulness of the term 'south' itself. He also suggests that some theoretical tools may have value in understanding the global urban experience despite their provenance. The issue then becomes one of conducting research which tests rather than assumes the theoretical efficacy of such tools.

Policy mobility. A new form of colonisation?

It is not just theory which is critiqued from this perspective, but practice. Weiner (2014), writing from the Brazilian perspective, questions the notion of 'best practice' in policy and the rise of globally circulating city-models (see also McCann and Ward, 2011). These are, he argues, also rooted in colonial history and he details, for example, how urban planning in Rio adopted European models from the Portuguese colonialists through to the French Beaux-Arts and the 'Barcelona effect'. Mabin (2014) also challenges the tendency to export 'modernity' as the aim of city building which has an underlying assumption that the Western city is somehow 'better'. Weiner argues that this practice has been cemented in more recent years through multi-lateral development agencies and research which 'reflects particular conceptions and goals' (p.51) under the guise of international collaboration. This, he argues, is another form of colonialisation, not the same as the cathedral and squares of the Portuguese but one which nevertheless demonstrates relations of power, domination and exclusion in similar ways to debates about the colonisation of knowledge.

The rise of global research agendas and the search for ways of addressing global challenges such as the millennium development goals, imperatives that to a certain extent have driven this project, can be seen as part of these debates. As Izzi points out in an auto-critique of one such project, these agendas set up expectations that research projects will produce cutting edge results, be interdisciplinary, collaborative, and participatory and achieve impact and equitable north-south relations all at the same time (https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2018/10/17/can-we-have-it-all-). There are dangers that from such practices new forms of knowledge colonialisation will occur and tokenistic practices will emerge, which do not fundamentally alter research agendas in the West unless attention is paid to the difficulties and politics of such projects. For example, she argues that space should be found to reframe questions as a result of participatory research as projects progress. This critique also raises questions about the micro-politics of co-creation projects, in particular, the extent that 'experts' and 'outsiders' frame debates, lead activities and present results.

Against this Weiner and others argue that practice and knowledge should be 'decolonised'. 'Decoloniality is an intentional act a process of "de-linking" knowledge, theory and praxis from Euro-centric Western structures and systems' (Fernandez, 2019; see also Mignolo, 2009). Weiner argues this is a dual process; recognising how the cities (and theories) of the West were themselves built upon colonialism (trade and slavery) i.e. modernity and colonialisation are linked, and also imagining a 'different world' not by replacing one set of theories with other 'Southern' ones but through 'pluri-versalism', dialogues and research which is specific to context.

Moving forward; beyond dichotomies

The implications of these debates in terms of future urban research are varied. For some (Roy and Watson) the challenge is now replacing many existing concepts and theories with new forms of knowledge and new concepts and theories – 'Southern theory'. However, others (Mabin and Weiner) argue against this, seeing it as replacing one set of limited theories with another. Instead, there is a need to move beyond critique and dichotomies to think about how research and policy mobility can be framed to avoid exclusion and the resulting partial theorisation. This implies more dialogue, reflexivity

and hybridity in research. This would include recognition of the diversity of experiences and knowledge and a commitment to theorising from this plurality/diversity. This is accompanied by an appreciation of the power relations of 'colonising' knowledge and an intent to 'trouble methodological paradigms and knowledge constructions' (Fernandez, 2019) while also paying attention to power dynamics within research processes (Gaventa, 1993).

Robinson (2013) and others, for example, call for a new form of comparative research which is not about comparing or transferring 'best practice' but about understandings emerging out of a deep appreciation of each context. In this vein, Weiner (2014) calls for a dialogical approach based on a 'borderless, free and fair trade of ideas', an appreciation of the condition of production of the knowledge that is being submitted to the dialogues, a questioning of taken for granted assumptions, and a recognition of the difficulties of translating ideas and practices from one place to another. In short, these seem to be about replacing the north/south dichotomy with a transformed research process and a search for pluralistic/hybrid theorising.

We turn now to look at the implications of these debates for the concept and practice of co-creation, as experienced on this project.

Co-creation. A Colonising Concept?

Major reviews of co-creation and related concepts already exist (see for example Voorberg et al, 2015; Horner, 2016). These indicate that co-creation is a diffuse and contested concept. Leaving aside these debates, we have focused here on the question raised in the introduction about whether co-creation is an example of a colonialising concept or whether it could be explored conceptually and methodologically in different contexts in a way that moves beyond dichotomies of north and south. We do this firstly by exploring the evolution of the term co-creation and secondly by exploring in more depth the understandings and uses of it from the perspective of our respondents.

Through carrying out a literature review for the project, it became clear that most recent writing and discussion on the concept of co-creation has largely come from and is related to the Global North (Colini and Brownill, 2018). Nevertheless, noting Weiner's calls for scholars to reveal the interplay between north and south in the formation of theories and ideas is one way of challenging such silences. Such an exercise reveals a pattern of north/south interaction which is arguably underplayed in many accounts. As shown elsewhere (Colini and Brownill, 2018) co-creation is not a new concept. It initially gained traction in the business world in the 1990s referring to the active involvement of customers in the 'co-creation' of the products they would consume in the future (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Significantly, the term then migrated to the world of social and economic development through the work of Eleanor Ostrom (1990) which stressed the value of cooperation and 'co-creation' in resource development and management, particularly in the Global South. Practices such as Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA), which focused on the participation of people in the formation of development programmes and initiatives developed around this, went on to influence community development activities in the North. However, this incorporation into international aid and development practice could be seen as supporting arguments around colonialisation and co-creation.

Another example of north/south interactions is the work of theorists such as Freire (1993) who established a strong base in theory and practice in the south, which then influenced thinking in the north. Crystallised in his work Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1993), Freire addressed one of the key concerns that co-creation and related concepts are addressing, that of knowledge and whose knowledge should be used in the basis of action and decisions, seeking to establish an epistemology based on challenging dominant discourses, de-centring exclusionary knowledge and acknowledging the value of multiple forms of knowledge. His theorisation of knowledge based on Brazilian society is a clear example of how the south has impacted theories in the north, as his pedagogic values and theories can now be found through most Anglo-Saxon education systems. In a similar way, but more recently, Mike Davis popularised the term 'favela' (Davis, 2015) in contrast to the English concept 'slum' to acknowledge differences across territories of poverty across the globe. Such a recent conceptualisation may still result in a dichotomy between 'slums' and 'favelas', but it has the potential of promoting the hybrid conceptualisation we are exploring for the term co-creation itself.

Considering the nature of the Co-Creation project, in which knowledge exchange is promoted between partners in European and the Global South (Brazil and Mexico), the views of these 'southern' partners, as expressed in their interviews with us, is of significance here. Firstly, at the level of terminology, most felt that the concept was yet to be commonly used in both the policy and academic literature in their countries. The prior arrival of other 'co-' terms, especially around social and economic development and also participatory arts movements, may have arguably led to the elision of the idea of co-creation with related terms such as co-production, a recurrent point raised by our informants. Secondly, there was some support for seeing co-creation as another 'idea from elsewhere' (McCann and Ward, 2011) moving from north to south. On the rare occasions we were told that the term co-creation was used, it tended to be by NGOs reliant on international funds and therefore linked to the global agenda of cooperation and development discussed earlier in this chapter. In this way, such NGOs become agents of policy mobility.

However, in a comment on why such mobility occurs, a respondent from one such NGO claimed that imported concepts like co-production or co-creation are sometimes imposed not only by the North but also by governments themselves, cementing what he called 'the relationship between the centre and periphery'. This is an acknowledgement of the relations of power and domination not just potentially between the north and south but also the dominant view in cities of the South 'the centre', and those voices historically marginalised, the 'periphery'. Nevertheless, while conscious of these relations, the organisation was also attempting to develop its own approaches under the co-creation heading which could challenge them, once again showing the complexities that exist.

Related to this, in the words of one respondent, "the proximity of co-creation to innovation is dangerous; there is a danger that (practices and theorisations) will be lost in the search or fashion for new words and ideas". For some respondents, this raised the danger that the use of a term such as co-creation could obscure long traditions of social thought and action in particular places, while others felt there was an opportunity for co-creation to learn from existing bodies of work pursuing similar goals. Some mentioned the work of theorists such as Freire already discussed. Additionally, several respondents called attention to the long and proud history of popular movements in the South, a long fight for a more meaningful involvement whenever external stakeholders come to work in their territories. This fight has sparked a conceptualisation of what popular movements in Brazil call 'effective participation', while in Mexico it has resulted in advocacy for participative development and

horizontally constructed public policies. In both cases, our respondents felt these practices, which have existed and matured in their countries over decades, are addressing what co-creation is ultimately aiming for. Therefore, arguing not only for continuity of social movements and activism in popular territories but also for a conversation between foreign concepts with local experiences, some respondents insisted on incorporating local traditions to the conceptualisation of co-creation when working in their territories.

However, thirdly, despite the dangers of uncritically adopting concepts from elsewhere, and even though co-creation is not part of the theoretical discourses of our respondents, some commented on the usefulness of a new concept in bringing in fresh ideas and discussions not only among academics but also policy makers: "could co-creation be a weapon to recognise agency and elevate claims and demands?" asked one. Respondents recognised the importance of having a space for dialogue, a space in which the different participating stakeholders openly acknowledge their interests, knowledge and pre-conceived ideas. Co-creation could be a way of opening up such spaces and acknowledging different forms of knowledge and debate. However, interviewees pointed out that co-creation "may change the way we look at a situation, the way we describe, analyse and discuss it, but it won't directly change the root of the problem [...]".

Finally, Co-Creation by definition focuses on the co-elaboration of objects. Some interviewees recognised the value of focusing on the production of an artefact or output, rather than becoming trapped in the discussion of intangible processes, the search for effective participation or trying to influence wider policy processes. This can open up new ways of influencing debates when other routes are blocked. This also led to discussion around the role of arts, culture and/or citizenship more broadly in the discussions of co-creation. For instance, our Brazilian respondents advocated a broader role for culture instead of focusing only on arts, as it encompasses popular processes of knowledge production more broadly.

Therefore, it would be too easy to conclude that co-creation is a concept only relevant to the Global North, making its usage in the South questionable, or that an inevitable process of colonisation was occurring. However, while the label 'co-creation' may not be applied by the partners in the Co-Creation project, the process of 'co-creation' may well be occurring under a different name: effective participation in Brazil or 'participatory development' in Mexico being some of them. There is also evidence of an awareness of how terms such as co-creation could be adapted, made and remade as they circulate globally.

Bearing in mind the calls of Watson and Robinson for more comparative research, this provides scope for exploring the different meanings, definitions and practices of 'co-creation' in a variety of different contexts in both the Global North and South. We do this not to develop conceptual clarity, i.e. reach an overarching definition of co-creation, but to show the complexity, variation and potential of the concept. We do this by focusing on a key aspect of the theory and practice of co-creation: the role of the state and state-citizen relations that are embodied within it. Therefore, in order to reflect on the socio-political particularities of these contexts, the following section explores the role of the state in Brazil and Mexico, relating it to Western liberal democracies.

Co-creation and the state; North and South

Co-creation as an activity, certainly within this project, tends to focus on the actions of communities attempting to make their voices heard, change conditions or address marginalisation and stigmatisation. In many contexts, this brings the co-creation process into contact with the state. Yet if definitions of co-creation are contested, then so is the relation between co-creation, people, and the state. In addition, the spaces of co-creation created by the dynamics between these elements can vary greatly from place to place. Therefore, this becomes fertile ground to explore further debates regarding north and south based on the experiences in the different countries in the project.

The role of the state and the relationship between the state and its publics is a key focus of debates on 'seeing from the South'. As indicated above, such debates include calls for an awareness of how governance forms part of the 'southern condition' (Mabin 2014) and the need to avoid imposing theories developed in the context of liberal Westernised democracies with their emphasis on consensus-building on the South. Within this, we focus on two areas: different rationalities of state-society relations and different spaces of participation. In terms of different state rationalities, Parnell and Robinson (2012) for example caution against seeing the state as monolithic and of assuming that neo-liberalising trends evident in the Global North are universal. Writing about South Africa, they see the state as having an important role in, for example, anti-poverty programmes which need not follow the co-opting logic of neoliberalism. This suggests the need for an awareness of different rationalities of state intervention, which again, we would argue, can transcend north/south distinctions. De Satge and Watson (2018) extend this to look at state/society relations. They use the term 'conflicting rationality' to describe state-society relations in highly conflictual southern contexts, where consensus-building or collaborative participatory processes are unlikely to be effective. For example, they write about attempts by the state to 'formalise' informal settlements which are met with resistance by those who feel their livelihoods and ways of life are being threatened as a result. Even practices such as co-creation, aimed at recognising diversity within territories, may be based on universal assumptions of inclusion that would fail to recognise the 'conflicting rationalities' (Watson, 2003) within a socio-political context.

The recognition of the complexities of state-society relations is extended when looking at participation. Cornwall (2004), for example, distinguishes between invited and claimed spaces. Invited spaces are those in which participants are asked to participate, such as those linked to public policy. Claimed spaces are those that are created and taken by citizens themselves either in opposition to or in the absence of formal policies. This inevitably raises questions about power. American planner Sherry Arnstein summed these relations up 50 years ago in her famous ladder of participation, with differing degrees of citizen power represented as different 'rungs' on the ladder. Notable in the ladder are the bottom rungs, which depict attempts at participation without changes in power dynamics, which instead can be used by those with power to legitimate their (unchanged) roles/decisions and manipulate participants (Arnstein, 1969). It is this sort of manipulation which prompted Cooke and Kothari (2001) to label participation as a new 'tyranny', linking it to the spread of neoliberal governance forms and development aid agendas (including practices such as PRA) around the world.

Miraftab (2009) writing from the context of the Global South, discusses the role of 'insurgent' planning here. These are practices which are 'counter-hegemonic, transgressive and imaginative'. That is, they create spaces which challenge the status quo (and for Miraftab that includes the transfer of policy

objectives from north to south) and aim for more inclusive and just outcomes. Such debates, while intersecting with north/south distinctions, nevertheless ultimately transcend them. There can be no simple reading off of particular participatory spaces being linked to particular geographies. Instead they can co-exist or conflict within the same city or even initiative. However, the context in which these practices occur needs to be fully appreciated and taken into account in ways that are aware of north/south dynamics.

Such arguments suggest that the state can take different forms in different places and over time and, as a result, there are complexities in the relationship between co-creation and the state which may or may not correlate with north/south distinctions. We illustrate this with an overview of the context of co-creation actions in the different locations within which the project is engaged. Later chapters discuss particular neighbourhoods in detail; here we focus on broad trends in state/civil society relations around co-creation drawing on ideas of differing and conflicting rationalities and spaces of participation.

In Western Europe, normative assumptions about co-creation as a 'good thing' have led to it being increasingly adopted within policy programmes, such as those of the EU. Many area-based schemes see the 'democratic deficit' as being part of the causes of neighbourhood disadvantage along with related issues such as the lack of social capital. Ways of overcoming this could be through collaborative planning, community involvement and the use of art projects to 'empower' and to build social capital. This will then contribute to the redirection of resources to areas/groups and the building of a consensus around future actions. Co-creation, in this way, is seen as a way of bringing together policy makers, residents, and other actors to 'co-create' solutions to particular issues/problems. Such approaches become further embedded through funding programmes on the national and global scales.

The role of culture and artistic practices in addressing urban deprivation and marginalisation have received increased attention in recent years. As Pruvot's chapter in this volume shows in the case of Saint Denis, at the macro level, culture is seen as a way of promoting economic growth and attracting inward investment and, at the micro level, a cultural strategy looks to involve young people in theatre, music and the arts to promote inclusion. Participatory practices are also labelled as co-creation or co-production with consultancies and agencies being employed to implement programmes. One such example is the 'co-creation' with artists and designers of open spaces and art works linked to a major new rail link. In this context, co-creation as a term and a process often implies the complex 'complicity' (to use the phrase from our Berlin conference) of state and non-state actors.

Critiques of such actions argue that they can be co-opted by the state and constitute 'governance through community' (Rose, 1996) with the state adopting co-creative policies in order to use inclusivity and participation to its own ends. An example in England is the Big Society of the 2010–15 Coalition government, when then Prime Minister David Cameron's political agenda to create a more participatory democracy and devolve responsibility to the local level came at a time of public sector cuts. As a result, the public was being asked to take on the role of co-creators/co-deliverers of services, either instead of the state or as unpaid volunteers for it. Others (e.g. Swyngedouw, 1997) argue these actions fundamentally ignore the conflict and the inequality in power that exists between participants and naively assume consensus can be built.

Focusing briefly in the role of arts, as the focus on Co-Creation within this project intends, it is important to highlight that similar critiques have been made of 'art-washing' (Pritchard, 2017) as a process by which artists and creative practices are used to literally *paint over* both the incorporation of communities through participation, but also the continued existence of major socioeconomic divisions which remain unaltered by the regeneration or other policies targeted at 'deprived' communities. The role of artists in the processes of gentrification is a particularly relevant issue here, both in terms of their role in the potential incorporation of community energy and also the micro-politics of co-creative practices (Ley, 2003).

Such examples and experiences highlight the dangers of entering the invited spaces of participation. This does not mean, however, that there are no spaces being claimed by and through co-creation in the Western European context. Throughout the European cities involved in the project it is possible to see examples where land is being used to create cultural spaces which celebrate local culture rather than promote economic development, and which use artistic practices to challenge and disrupt dominate narratives about people and places.

In the case of Brazil, by contrast, there has been a dramatic change in state-society relations as a result of the election of a popularist right-wing government. This has closed down spaces of co-creation and policy opened in previous years and lead to state responses in low income areas being characterised largely by military interventions and an absence of social programmes. This is particularly the case in Rio, where over the previous two decades, political narratives advocated terms such as 'community participation' and 'social inclusion' (such as the discourse behind Favela Bairro), enabling communities to co-design urban interventions. In the words of our respondents, these approached 'true co-creation' or 'effective participation'. In the current political scenario, however, the Western policy 'ideal' of all stakeholders (particularly state and non-state actors) co-creating solutions appears both distant and naïve. Nowadays, the reality for many low income areas is that the presence of the state is largely characterised though police 'pacification' units, a militarised and controlling form of 'poverty management', and an example of 'anti-politics' according to our partners. As a result, and in a clash of rationalities, favelas are 'subordinated' and remade within public policy not as a space where the state and civil society can work together but as a space to be 'pacified' and occupied.

Therefore, in the face of a militarised state looking to restrict rights and resources to low income areas, culture and co-creation become both highly constrained and highly politicised. It is here that the discussion of insurgent spaces becomes significant. Cultural practices such as poetry, graffiti, music and dance were seen as challenging such images, bringing different people and communities together and as practices of resistance. As one interviewee said, "Cultural movements have the possibility of reconfiguring the city […] We do politics through culture". But they are also mindful that "we are not able to change wider structures of power and inequality in society" even though they were able to enact a different notion of community politics which defies the state's positioning.

Within this context, some see the potential of 'co-creation' as a way of opening new spaces of dialogue, sharing knowledge, and legitimising the claims of marginalised groups. An example here is the Popular Plan for Vila Autodromo, a favela threatened with demolition to make way for the Olympic Park in Barra da Tijuca. Pressure groups, residents, universities and others came together to create an alternative plan which was partially successful in ensuring 20 families remained on the site. Such activities, as well

as giving support and sharing knowledge, can be useful in legitimising campaigns and validating the claims of marginalised groups. In other cities in Brazil, for example Salvador, where the local state is more open to working with communities, work between universities and community groups has been welcomed as a way of bringing the municipality and professionals into the arena to enable their demands to be implemented. Therefore, there could be hope for 'co-creation' as a form of autonomous practice beyond the state, or which links with parts of the state that are more sympathetic. However, in recognition of the significance of the micro-politics of co-creative practices, respondents were clear that this had to be from the perspective of the community reaching out, not NGOs, universities or artists reaching in.

In the Brazilian context, therefore, co-creation could be seen as a potential insurgent practice formed in the face of a very different form of state intervention both from the ideals of consensus-building and from the contexts in other partner countries to the project.

The value of making South-South comparisons as part of the attempt to break down rigid north/south dichotomies is underlined when we explore our third partner country. State-society relations in Mexico appear very different from the Brazilian experience. The foundations for the current Mexican state rationality can be traced to the early 1990s. The adoption of a neoliberal model in 1988 increased socioeconomic polarisation which resulted in a crisis of political legitimacy (see Chapters 5 and 9 for more details on the neoliberal shift in the Global South and in Mexico City respectively). During this political crisis, governmental research on marginality (CONAPO, 1994) acknowledged the 'emergence of an active civil society that claimed new terms of political coexistence, as well as spaces for participation [...] specially in the political and social institutions of the State' (CONAPO, 1994: 9). This document not only established an Index of Municipal Marginality (IMM) still used today to locate the most vulnerable neighbourhoods, but also shifted the role of marginalised groups from being purely passive beneficiaries to active agents in urban programmes. Under such a rationality, the state provided multiple invited spaces for participation over the last two decades, including the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme since 2006 (see Chapter 10). However, in practice, questions exist about whether some of these are co-opted by the state as in European examples.

The election of a left-wing government in 2018, which expressly challenges neoliberalism, has intensified the discourse on opening more spaces of participation and social justice. For example, a new programme, PILARES (points of innovation, freedom, arts, education and knowledge) establishes innovation points to provide skills and training aimed at developing economic opportunities together with the community which, while not using the term co-creation, suggests a similar approach of bringing together multiple stakeholders and experiences, including artists, to address urban issues, but it is too soon to see whether this will lead to any changes in outcomes.

There has also been a long history within Mexico on the use of murals as a form of political expression (see Chapters 5 and 9). However, one of our respondents said: 'sometimes tools from public and community art are appropriated by the state for regeneration purposes', which acknowledges the risk of co-creative spaces being co-opted by the state as has happened in Western Europe. Therefore, the Mexican example, while not denying the differences between north and south, reveals how rationalities of state intervention and configurations of participatory spaces can cross the boundaries of north and south.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown the significance of 'seeing from the South' to understanding and characterising the theory and practice of 'co-creation'. Not only is it clear that there is a need to highlight the interplay of theorisations between north and south which underpins such concepts (de-colonialisation), but it is also apparent that co-creation is constituted and enacted in different ways in different contexts. This underlines Robinson's call for context-rich research and Weiner's 'pluri-versatilism' to help break down north-south dichotomies and to generate new forms of understanding. Later chapters in this volume add to these rich understandings of how co-creation is constituted and experienced in a variety of contexts.

It has also shown how the spaces of co-creation, particularly those linked with state activity, vary over time and space, not only between north and south but also within different places. This underlines the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all view of co-creation, and instead see it as a contingent and complex practice which has multiple possibilities and limitations partly dependent on place and context. Practitioners and academics need to be alive to these differences and to take them into account in both theorisation and action.

Finally, the experience of 'co-creation' in some parts of the Global South also underlines its potential in creating autonomous, insurgent and alternative spaces. Such spaces can challenge not only the transfer of 'ideas from elsewhere', but also related attempts to impose from the 'centre/top/powerful' on the 'peripheral and marginalised'. Despite the contrasts in the relationship between co-creation and the state in different contexts, this experience can speak to universal debates about co-option, empowerment and 'art-washing'.

Therefore, co-creation and co-creators need not inevitably be agents of 'colonisation' but *can* be a way of changing relations both between north and south and within individual cities. However, it is equally clear that such potential depends on an awareness of context and micro-politics; an awareness that is deepened and intensified through 'seeing from the South'.

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