

**A Place to Live-**  
**A Typology of Stakeholder Co-creation Activities**

Lisa Källström  
*PhD student*  
Kristianstad University  
291 88 Kristianstad  
Sweden

Lisa.Kallstrom@hkr.se  
+46 44 203117  
+46 703 368782

## **ABSTRACT**

Stakeholder co-creation is of key strategic importance and a topical issue within both place marketing and public governance. However, co-creation is a wide concept and there is a need to further the understanding of the roles of stakeholders and the specific activities in co-creation. Inspired by the place marketing field, the context of this study is the place. Thus, a contribution is made to public governance by a change in focus. Furthermore, a model grounded in empirical work is created which helps us to understand different activities that take place in the co-creation of a place to live. Six important activities in place co-creation are identified: handling, enabling, operating, social networking, supporting and representing.

**Key words:** place marketing, public governance, co-creation, stakeholders, grounded theory

## INTRODUCTION

*“We [the municipality] have of course a very big responsibility. Who else is as large as we and can take that responsibility? However, it is not only our responsibility; we share it with companies, residents, non-profit organizations, Kristianstad University and many more, who all are ambassadors for their city.”*

The quote comes from an interview with a municipal official, where we discussed the municipality’s role in creating an attractive place for their residents. The quote is important, since it puts the finger on the relative roles of government, e.g. the municipality, and other stakeholders and how they contribute to the development of the place. The last 20 years, the interest in, and the relevance of, public governance has grown (e.g. Peters & Pierre, 1998; Bovaird, 2005; Bovaird & Löffler, 2009; Edelenbos et al, 2010; Klijn, 2012), and as a consequence stakeholder engagement has become a buzz-word. At the same time we can see an emergent awareness within place marketing for stakeholder involvement (Kavaratzis, 2012; Kemp et al, 2012; Lindstedt, 2015; Thelander & Säwe, 2015). Within place marketing, stakeholder involvement and co-creation has, so far, mostly been studied in the scope of the place branding processes (Nisco et al, 2008; Ruzzier & Petek, 2011; Kemp et al, 2012; Lindstedt, 2015; Cerda-Bertomeu & Sarabia-Sanchez, 2016; Henninger et al, 2016; Martinez, 2016). Even if there has been some recognition for stakeholders as co-creators of public goods, services and policies (Braun et al, 2013), there is a evident gap in the place marketing literature when it comes to the co-creation of actual offerings, which this paper helps to close.

Public management naturally assume governments, e.g. the municipality, the starting point for analysis (Martin, 2009). Thus, public management differ from place marketing, where the place itself is the natural level of analysis. The above mentioned, growing field of public governance does, however, open up for studies that do not study the place context solely from a government perspective, but rather take a more open approach. Lately, the need for coordination and collaboration between a range of organizations and groups, both within and beyond government, has been put forward (Alford et al, 2017). Inspired by the place marketing field, the context of this study is the place, and the purpose is to explore the stakeholder co-creation activities behind a place to live. The municipality is not the focus, rather the municipality is seen as one of many stakeholders to the place. Furthermore, the scope of the concept co-creation is extended, since what is studied is not the co-creation of a specific public service but rather how the place as such, i.e. a bundle of urban offerings (Braun, 2008), is co-created. Interviews with municipal officials and elected politicians as well as focus group discussions with residents help us to explore how a place is perceived as being co-created by different stakeholders. A part from contributing to public governance by a change in focus, a model is created which helps us to understand different activities that take place in the co-creation of a place to live. Co-creation is a wide term and stakeholders can contribute and co-create in many different ways. Grounded in empirical work, this paper describes six important activities in place co-creation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Place Marketing and Stakeholder Involvement*

The increased global connectivity and increased mobility of both humans and capital have created competition between cities and regions, which has led us to produce the market-oriented solution place marketing (Caldwell & Freire, 2004; Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012). Place marketing is focused on creating a place in which actors can create value, which Braun's (2008) definition of place marketing explicates. According to Braun, place marketing is "...*the coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city's customers and the city's community at large.*" (Braun, 2008, p. 43). To create a good place image is also an important part of place marketing (Kavaratzis, 2004). Image marketing and branding is closely related, and branding is of great importance in marketing today. Branding endows a product, or in this case the place, with a specific and more distinctive identity (Cova, 1996). Place branding is a large field within place marketing, however the two terms place *marketing* and place *branding* is closely connected and are often being used interchangeably (Skinner, 2008).

The unit of analysis within place marketing is normally "the place". According to Braun's (2008) definition of place marketing the place must be regarded as valuable *urban offerings*. These offerings consist of a large variety of both products and services, which are believed to bring value to the stakeholders. The offerings are dependent upon the natural conditions in the geographical area, but are still to a high degree possible to influence and develop. The offerings can for example be a place's community assets such as parks and gardens (Insch & Florek, 2010; Zenker et al, 2013) and availability of apartments and houses (Zenker et al, 2013). To see the place as urban offerings also implies that a place is not a single product, instead it is a composition of a multitude of different services and products. It is the composition of services that constitutes the place and it is the composition together with the quality of the individual components that is under scrutiny when the place is discussed in place marketing. These offerings are provided by a number of different companies and organizations, which makes the place context very complex.

There are many stakeholders to the place, i.e. many actors whose actions affect the place or who are affected by the place and its achievements (Bryson, 2004). Governments, such as municipalities, and the entire public sector, plays an important role as a key stakeholder of the place. Other important stakeholders are: residents, visitors, companies and investors (Braun, 2008; Zenker & Martin, 2011; Niedomysl & Jonasson, 2012). Due to the complex nature of the place, stakeholders play a large role in place marketing and the importance of stakeholders and co-creation has been given more attention lately (Thelander & Säwe, 2015). Kavaratzis (2012) goes as far as talking about a new conceptualization of place branding, where the stakeholders are given a prominent role. The emergence of the service-based logic for marketing (e.g., Grönroos, 1982; Vargo & Lusch, 2004), which emphasizes the concept of co-creation, has contributed to the increased interest in stakeholders. The service-based logic has been suggested

to be relevant for place marketing (Merz *et al*, 2009; Warnaby, 2009; Hankinson, 2010; Kavaratiz, 2012; Källström, 2016; Källström & Ekelund, 2016) and when applied in a place marketing context, the service-based logic helps to put focus on the user, e.g. residents and visitors, and how they co-create value-in-use in the place context.

The stakeholder approach has, so far, mostly been studied in the context of place branding, i.e. in connection to how a place *brand* is developed and implemented (Nisco et al, 2008; Ruzzier & Petek, 2011; Kemp et al, 2012; Lindstedt, 2015; Cerda-Bertomeu & Sarabia-Sanchez, 2016; Henninger et al, 2016; Martinez, 2016). Martinez (2016) argue that the most effective place branding initiatives are those in which a wide range of local stakeholders are involved. The significance of local government is not invalidated within the co-creation approach, rather the government is seen as having a focal position in the place service system (Lindstedt, 2015) and is playing a key role in place branding initiatives since they often defines when, how and why place branding projects are initiated (Cerda-Bertomeu & Sarabia-Sanchez, 2016).

A specific feature of place marketing is that residents not only consume the place they live in but also shape it, along with the other stakeholders (Rozhkov & Skriabina, 2015). Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker (2013) have explored the different roles residents play in the formation and communication of place brands and they identified the residents as having three major roles. Since the residents and their interactions with others form the social milieu of a given place, the residents can be seen as being an *integrated part of the place*. Residents are also *ambassadors* for their place and their role as *citizens* are highlighted. Ambassadorship behaviors and citizenship behaviors has been further emphasized in a study by Taecharungroj (2016), who defined citizenship behavior as behaviors that contribute to the city by *helping other people* and *participating in events* that can improve the city. Inch & Stuart (2015) also recognizes that the residents carries multiple roles for the place brand and e.g. highlights the possibility for residents to be *supporters*, but also indifferent or spreading negative word-of-mouth.

### ***Stakeholder Involvement in Public Management and Public Governance***

Public management is an academic discipline that studies the implementation of government policy and how civil servants are working in the public service. Public management naturally assume the governments, e.g. the municipality, the starting point for analysis (Martin, 2009). Municipalities are of course geographic places, however within public management municipalities are mainly regarded as service-providing organizations and political institutions (Waeraas et al, 2015). Thus, public management differ from place marketing when it comes to the level of analysis. Within place marketing the place itself is the natural level of analysis, while in public management the municipality, or other government, and the public service is in focus.

However, the role of government is changing in the modern society and public governance, to be compared to public government, has been given increased interest the last 20 years (e.g. Peters & Pierre, 1998; Bovaird, 2005; Bovaird & Löffler, 2009; Edelenbos et al, 2010; Klijn,

2012). Public governance points at situations where decision making and implementation take place in networks of public, private and semiprivate actors (Edelenbos et al, 2010) and the traditional view that the public sector is the major actor and that they alone can influence the economy and society is questioned (Peters & Pierre, 1998). Public governance typically assume *“a multiple stakeholder scenario where collective problems can no longer be solved only by public authorities but require the cooperation of other players (citizens, business, voluntary sector, media etc) and in which practices such as mediation, arbitration and self-regulation may often be more effective than public action”* (Löffler, 2009).

The label governance, thus, incorporates stakeholder involvement (Klijn, 2012) and the shift from public government to public governance implies that governments are seen as depending on many stakeholders with different resources and that various actors have to be included in the policy-making and implementation process (Edelenbos et al, 2010; Klijn, 2012; Alford et al, 2017). Thus, a dominant feature of the governance model is societal networks (Peters & Pierre, 1998; Boivard, 2005). Bryson and colleagues (2017) argue that the creation of public value takes place at multiple levels such as individual, group, organizational, community, regional and national levels, and much of the dynamism in the public realm is due to the interactions *across* overlapping spheres.

From a government’s point of view, there are several reasons for encouraging stakeholder engagement and participation. First of all, citizenship participation is important so strengthen democracy (Pestoff, 2009). Early involvement of stakeholders and citizen’s groups also enhances legitimacy by living up to the claim to be close to the citizen, which increases the accountability, transparency and the public confidence (Martin, 2009; Klijn, 2012). Perhaps most important, the knowledge and effort from stakeholders is believed to improve the outcome and the quality of policy and public services (Bryson, 2004; Martin, 2009; Edelenbos et al, 2010; Klijn, 2012). Stakeholder participation increases the chances that the service meet the user’s needs, since they have been a part of designing and/or producing the service themselves (Martin, 2009).

Stakeholders can be engaged and participate in the networks in different ways. Martin (2009) differ between different forms of participation and has developed the public participation spectrum. In this spectrum he distinguishes between *information*, one-way flow of information from public agencies to the public, *consultation*, two-way dialogue between public agencies and the public and *co-production*. Co-production is a broad term (Melik & Krabben, 2016) which has become increasingly topical for a wide range of academics (Verschuere et al, 2012). A widely accepted definition of co-production is offered by Ostrom (1996, p. 1073): *“the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not “in” the same organization”*. Later definitions put more emphasis on the public service and the citizens as co-producers. For example Brandsen and Honingh (2016, p. 431) claim that *“coproduction is a relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the work of the organization”*. However, it is recognized that co-production also can include the non-profit sector and the civil society at large (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006), as well as large

scale corporations (Melik & Krabben, 2016), and not only citizens. Another term for active stakeholder involvement is *co-creation*, which refers to “*the active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process*” (Voorberg et al, 2015, p. 1335). The concept co-creation and co-production seems to be closely related (Gebauer, 2010; Voorberg et al, 2015), as both concepts refer to that customers are involved in the creation of value. The present study adopts the usage of the service-based logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), in using the term co-creation.

The intensity of stakeholder involvement differ and co-creation can take different forms (Pestoff, 2009). For example, Martin (2009) and Pestoff (2009) writes about the importance of getting the residents to cooperate by taking care of themselves and the place, for example by not committing crimes, living a healthy life or, more concretely, not spitting chewing gum on the pavement. Löffler (2009) highlights that public agencies need to *co-design, co-manage, co-deliver* and *co-assess* their services and resources with their key stakeholders. Based on a systematic literature review of co-creation and co-production, Voorberg et al (2015) describes citizens as *co-implementers, co-designers* and *initiators*. Furthermore, it is recognized that private firms can “*do the service*” or have an “*enabling role*” (Löffler, 2009). Pestoff (2009) studied childcare in Sweden and found four dimensions of co-production: *economic, social, political* and *service specific participation*. Although active stakeholder involvement is a topical question within public governance, there is still great uncertainty about the relative roles of different stakeholders and how different stakeholders can contribute in the co-creation of for example a service or cooperate to improve the general quality of life (Boivard, 2005; Löffler, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative methodology is used to explore the stakeholder co-creation activities behind a place to live. The empirical context is two typical municipalities in southern Sweden, Hässleholm Municipality and Kristianstad Municipality. Sweden is a democracy with a long history of stakeholder engagement. In Sweden, resident dialogue should be integrated in both the control and the operational development in the municipalities, with the purpose to build a sustainable society (SKL, 2017). The purpose of typical case selection is that they can illustrate or highlight what is typical, normal and average (Patton, 2002). The municipalities in this study are fairly typical cases for municipalities in Sweden when it comes to for example size, rankings concerning satisfied residents, unemployment rates and the municipal emphasis on resident dialogue. The municipalities have together 130,000 inhabitants, and both municipalities experience slow but steady growth.

### ***Data Collection***

The study is based on interviews with municipal officials and elected politicians as well focus group discussions with residents, which allowed me to capture the residents’ and municipalities’ perceptions of how a place is co-created. The semi-structured interviews were conducted at the municipal organization in Hässleholm and Kristianstad and the first interview

in each municipality was based on purposive selection and resulted in interviews with the municipal directors. The director is the highest official in the municipality and manages the municipality's services. After the first interview, a snowball technique was used. New interviews were arranged with recommended people as long as each new interview contributed significantly to the understanding of the case (Patton, 2002). The sample selection technique resulted in 20 interviews. Each interview lasted between 45 to 70 min and the interviews were recorded. The interviews took place in the interviewee's office and was conducted during a period of five months.

Focus groups is a valid research approach in exploratory research, as they provide opportunities to interact with a small number of people in a semi-structured and purposeful discussion where discussion between the participants is encouraged (Hair et al, 2011). This method was used to explore the perception of the residents. The case sampling was *purposive* and the participants were chosen based on a combination of *quota* and *reputational* case selection (Miles et al, 2014). The selection was guided by a reference group consisting of representatives from municipalities and the business sector. It was important to include a good representation of gender, age, life-stage, and ethnicity to maximize the diversity of the sample. Six focus groups were conducted before theoretical saturation was achieved (Charmaz, 2014). In total 33 residents participated in the focus group discussions; 18 women and 15 men between 14-85 years old, with varying positions in the society and with different ethnical backgrounds. Each focus group interview lasted between 45 minutes and two hours, depending mainly on how the discussion developed. A semi-structured interview guide was designed to make sure the different focus groups covered the same topics and to create a basis for the development of dependable and meaningful findings. The aim in the focus groups was to encourage the participants to talk free and candidly.

The study is inspired by grounded theory. However, I see the need for interpretation and share Charmaz's (2014) view that theory is constructed by the researcher, but should be grounded in the empirical data. Next follows a description of the data analysis, with focus on how the empirical material was sorted and reduced.

### ***Sorting and Reducing***

The data analysis and theorization started already during the interviews, but became more intense during the transliteration and more structured during the formal data analysis stages. To simultaneously collect and analyze data can help the researcher to go further and deeper into the research problem, as well as starting to develop categories (Charmaz, 2014). Memo-writing (Charmaz, 2014) was used during the entire research process as a tool to facilitate early analysis.

The empirical material is quite rich and cover more topics than the focus of this paper. It was therefore necessary to start the formal data analysis by making an *initial sorting and reduction* of the material. The *initial coding* (Charmaz, 2014), or *first cycle coding* if one prefer (Miles et al, 2014), was done in two steps. First, the transcribed material was read through and the material *coded for topics* (Charmaz, 2014, p.120). All passages which in some way touched upon the question of how stakeholders contributed to making the place a good place to live was coded with "stakeholders' contribution". Material coded in this way was moved to a new document which ended up consisting of 36 pages of transcribed text, which then constituted the



empirical material subject for further coding and analysis. This can be seen as a *categorical reduction*, where certain parts of the material is excluded in order to get a more manageable and theoretical interesting data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015).

In the second step of the initial coding the material was, primarily, *coded for action* (Charmaz, 2014, p.116), i.e. the ambition was to code with words that reflect an activity. This ambition can be traced back to the constructionism beliefs underpinning the study, which makes me interested in action and activity in order to be able to re-create the context and process (Charmaz, 2014). Since I was looking for increasing the understanding of stakeholders contributing to the place and the activities in place co-creation, I actively searched for: *Who is seen as responsible for the place?* and *In what way do they contribute to the place?* (the actual action or process). Thus, every code entailed two rows; who did something and what did they do? The coding resulted in 179 codes. A typical code could look like:

Residents
Talking positive about their place

After the initial coding, the next step was *focused coding*. The purpose was to reduce the data further and to see higher level of categories. The starting point was the 179 codes and the aim was to group codes with the same meaning, which resulted in 71 unique codes. The reduction, from the transcribed material to the 71 codes, was carefully conducted, and repeated, in order to make sure that the categories represented the empirical data. The reduction can be seen as theorizing, since I label the empirical data with my own categories, and by doing so I define what the empirical data is about. Examples of codes were *offering something to do*, *investing in large projects* and *supporting initiatives*.

In an effort to increase the understanding of stakeholder co-creation activities behind a place to live, it was important to approach the empirical material with an open mind. The common feature of the stakeholder groups is that there are human beings behind all categories and many times an individual belong to more than one stakeholder group at the same time. I therefore moved on to theorize how stakeholders contribute to the place, without the traditional categorization of stakeholder groups as a starting point. To be able to explore how stakeholders contribute to the place focus is turned to the activities performed by the stakeholders. This puts the people behind the place in a new light; the *identity* is no longer in focus rather the *activity* they contribute with to the place.

The reduced data, which at this point was consisting of 71 codes, was scrutinized one more time. Focus was turned to the activities, and with this as a starting point a new puzzle was put together. To create themes, types or categories is one way to build theory (Swedberg, 2012), which help to differentiate fact from each other and in this way to order them. The data was reduced even further to 41 activities, that the municipality and residents perceived as being performed in the place context. These were grouped together under a higher order (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and in this way a *typology* over perceived activities in stakeholder co-creation was created from the empirical data, i.e. the empirical data defined the activities (Becker, 1998). Six main types of activities are seen as central for stakeholders to perform. The typology of these activities are presented below, together with quotes from the transcribed interviews, with the purpose to be transparent and show how the findings are grounded in the empirical material.

Appendix 1 shows the activities together with the underlying codes for each activity, as well as examples of who are seen as doing the different activities.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Handling***

The study shows that it is important that someone steps up and are handling business in the place context. Handling the place incorporates *taking responsibility* for the place and other difficult tasks such *prioritizing* and *making decisions*. One municipal manager highlights the importance of being determined and making decisions:

*“But sometimes you [the municipality] cannot listen all the way, sometimes you have to do things, for things to happen.”*

Also the residents highlights the importance of someone who takes responsibility and make the decisions:

*“The municipality has an important responsibility as they decide very much of what can be done and what cannot be done in this town. They have their various rules and tools.”*

When handling it is also seen as vital to be active in *developing* the place and with this comes *investing* in the place and large projects and to *coordinate* different actors and initiatives.

### ***Enabling***

Enabling things to happen is seen as an important activity in the co-creation of a place to live. You don't necessarily do the things yourself, but you are *assisting* others and are *creating opportunities and conditions* for development. This is well articulated by a municipal manager working with leisure and culture:

*“We [the municipality] cannot do everything. I try to work with different actors. We cannot produce all theater, other people also have to do it. There must be a will among citizens to do things. But I do believe that we [the municipality] have a great role when it comes to having institutions and to enabling things.”*

One way to enable things is to *unite* different actors to allow for *cooperation* between stakeholders. Another important aspect of enabling is to *encourage* and to *strengthen* good initiatives. Just as a car needs lubricating, a place also needs lubricants to function well. In this case *lubricating* can take many different forms, for example monetary grants or the use of *influence* in order to win advantages for someone else.

A student in one of the focus groups highlights the aspects of supporting, strengthening and investing in projects:

*“The municipality has to be there for the enthusiasts. If someone wants to do something, then they has to be there. With financing for example. If there is something that can enrich Kristianstad [one of the municipalities in this study], the municipality should be there.”*

## ***Operating***

The study clearly shows that a place needs someone who actually initiates and does things. An important part of operating is *making things happen*, i.e. to *create and start new things*. This in turn *creates job opportunities*.

A woman in one of the focus groups highlighted the importance of enthusiastic people:

*“We talked about the nightlife and then there is a man called [excluded for anonymity] in this town, whom you can have many different opinions about, but he is an amazing entrepreneur who starts things.”*

The municipality, the regional government and the state government are responsible for a wide range of *public services*. A municipal politician explains:

*“The municipality has really two roles. One is to run the public welfare; schools, preschools, a secure elderly care. That is to operate. This is a big and tough assignment.”*

A part from the public services it is important that other services are offered, it can for example be *offering events, culture experiences* and, in general, *things to do* for all ages. It can also be about *making the place beautiful*.

## ***Social Networking***

The social aspect of co-creating a place to live is highlighted in the study. The social networking activity contributes, for example, to the place by *creating meeting points* and by *bringing people together* and in that way *linking together* the city. As a municipal manager puts it:

*“This is what we work with now when we are creating a new vision for Kristianstad [one of the municipalities in this study]. Here we see the municipality’s role as linking people together. We are the one who creates arenas, which can be used as meeting points.”*

An important part of social networking has to do with communication. *Listening* is one part, but it is also necessary for people to speak their mind. *Spreading positive vibrations* is also a part of social networking. Social networking does not have to big things. As a woman in her early teens expressed it:

*“We can be nice to people who lives here”*

A vital part of social networking is to *create fellowship* and to work with *integration*.

## ***Supporting***

Supporting is highlighted as a crucial activity. To support the place means, for example, to *participate* in the activities that are offered in the place setting. As a mother with two young children pointed out in one of the focus groups:

*“But this is on a large scale. When they talk about businesses and the municipality and so on. But I also think that we people, the ordinary person, also play a role. Maybe the lead role. For example, when we go to Kyrkis [church open house]. It would be so boring if no mum would be there. To meet other mums, that’s what makes the moment so special.”*

This notion is highlighted by many, both by representatives from the municipality and the residents. A local business owner stressed:

*“There are entrepreneurs and enthusiasts who start things, but then it is the “us” who needs to support and participate. An arena is build and therefore WE together need to fill the arena.”*

Supporting is not only about participating in activities and events. It can also be about supporting the *local shops*. A student in one of the focus groups claimed:

*“It is maybe a bit old fashioned, but I like that you support the local shops. I like to buy Klackabacken’s [local micro brewery] bier just because it is from here”*

Another part of supporting is to *offer ones time* in for example youth associations. In that way you support both the association and the young. A rather invisible, but still very important, aspect of supporting is to *take responsibility for one’s own action*, to make sure that you *don’t destroy* anything and to be a *role-model* for others. A woman at a meeting point for parents and children said:

*“Then I think that everyone has a responsibility. That it, us that lives here. When I’m walking I make sure not to through my garbage on the ground. Everyone has a responsibility.”*

## **Representing**

Finally, the study shows that an important part in co-creating a place to live is to *talk about the place in positive terms*. This is believed to impact both the internal and external stakeholders of the place in a positive way. One municipal manager argues:

*“Everyone who lives here is responsible for the place. Everyone who works here. As an ambassador. The municipality cannot say that now we have an attractive place, that is everyone’s task! The stories that we tell other people. If you give a bad picture, then it doesn’t matter how much the municipality does. It is the people who lives here and who spends time here who are the best marketers of the place.”*

A local newspaper and local radio channels are also highlighted as having an important part in this activity theme. A man in one of the focus groups argued:

*“...it is important with a local newspaper. You can joke all you want, but you get your local news!”*

*Talking about the place, spreading news and information and in general marketing the place strengthens the profile of the place, helps to build pride for the place and can in the long run even make the place famous.*

### *Six Activities in the Co-Creation of a Place to Live*

Surprisingly many activities are identified as important in creating a place to live and the importance of co-creation, i.e. the active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process (Voorberg et al, 2015), is supported. It is seen as desirable for many different types of stakeholders to be active in the place context and for example, the passive resident that simply lives in a place is gone and instead the resident is highlighted as being able to contribute to the place through many different activities. Concretely, six key activities in the co-creation of a place to live are constructed from the empirical material; *handling*, *enabling*, *operating*, *social networking*, *supporting* and *representing*, which help us to understand how the place is perceived to be co-created, as well as increases our understanding of the concept of co-creation (see figure 1). The study indicates that the activities should be seen as complementing each other. It is believed that if all activities are performed, they together create a good place to live, thus the activities are interrelated and reinforces each other. A fictive example can illustrate how the different activities co-exist and complement each other.

A youth association wants to put up a play, a modern version of Romeo and Juliet (activity: operating). In order for them to be able to do it they need to have access to a theater. The municipality chooses to let them rent the city theater at a very low price (activity: enabling). This starts a debate about how to use the theater, but the municipal decides to stick with their initial decision (activity: handling). The actors primarily promote the play themselves, by talking to friends and family (activity: representing). Opening night the theater is almost sold out (activity: supporting). The evening is a success and the atmosphere in the theater is very positive; people are talking to each other and are in general having a good time (activity: social networking). The local newspaper writes about the play (activity: enabling) and the people who was there the opening night tells their family, friends and co-workers what a great time they had at the show (activity: representing). The next show is sold out.

This example illustrates the complexity of the place context and shows how different stakeholders *together*, but through *different activities*, can co-create something positive for the place.



**Figure 1:** A Place to Live: Stakeholder Co-creation Activities

Previous research offer some support for the activities constructed from the empirical material. Löffler (2009) recognize private firms as having an *enabling* role. Löffler (2009) also argues that the government should co-manage the place as well as co-design and co-deliver their services, which can be connected to the activities *handling* and *operating*. The importance of *representing* has been highlighted as an important activity for residents in earlier studies. For example, Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker (2013) describes the residents are ambassadors, Taecharunroj (2016) emphasizes the ambassadorship behaviors of the residents and Inch & Stuart (2015) argues that residents can be both supporters, but also indifferent or spreading negative word-of-mouth. The substance of *supporting* has also been mentioned in earlier research, in connection to the role of the resident as a citizen (Braun et al, 2013) where Taecharunroj (2016) incorporates participating in events and helping other people in the citizenship behavior. Activities that can be included in supporting has also been highlighted by public governance scholars such as Martin (2009) and Pestoff (2009), who both emphasize the importance of residents to cooperate by for example taking care of the place.

The study also reveals who, i.e. what kind of stakeholders, the residents and representatives for the municipality view as important in the co-creation of the place (see appendix 1). Even if researchers in public governance are open for a multiple stakeholder scenario (Löffler, 2009), the government, such as municipalities, has a natural and often leading, role within public governance (Martin, 2009, Waeraas et al, 2015) and also within the place marketing literature the government is seen as having a focal position in the place service system (Lindstedt, 2015). The study offers support to the notion that the municipality and its public officials and politicians play a major role in the place co-creation. The municipality is seen as being involved in five, out of the six activities and as having a lead role when it comes to *handling* and *enabling*. It is only when it comes to *supporting* that the municipality is not highlighted as playing a role. A second stakeholder group that is highlighted as important for the place, in both the place marketing literature (Inch & Stuart, 2015; Rozhkov & Skriabina, 2015; Braun et al, 2013 to mention some) and within public governance (Löffler, 2009; Martin, 2009) is the residents. The

residents are highlighted as being very important for many activities, especially when it comes to supporting, where they are seen as having the key responsibility, but also in *operating*, *social networking* and *representing*.

A part from the two major stakeholder groups, the municipality and the residents, the business sector, the local media, the non-profit sector, the church and elite sport teams are highlighted as contributing to the co-creation of the place. These groups can be identified in previous research, even if elite sport teams and the church normally is not specifically highlighted, but rather can be seen as incorporated in for example community organizations and the business-sector (Löffler, 2009). Visitors, who often are seen as an important stakeholder group in place marketing (Braun 2008; Zenker & Martin, 2011; Niodomysl & Jonasson, 2012), are not specifically mentioned by the participants in this study.

## CONCLUSIONS

Stakeholder involvement has become an important concept both within public governance (e.g. Löffler, 2009; Pestoff 2009, Edenbos et al, 2010; Klijn, 2012) and in place marketing (e.g. Kavaratzis, 2012; Thelander & Säwe, 2015). Stakeholder involvement can take many forms, for example co-creation, which implies active involvement of the public in for example service design and delivery (Voorberg et al, 2015). However, co-creation is a wide concept and activity, which many stakeholders can be involved in, in many different ways. This study aims to explore the stakeholder co-creation activities, and what co-creation more specifically incorporates. The context is not a specific public service, rather the scope is the place and the stakeholder co-creation activities behind a place to live. Six central activities in co-creation are constructed from the empirical material, and a framework is developed. Thus, the current paper contributes to the public governance field with a new analytical model on co-creation activities. *Handling*, *enabling*, *operating*, *social networking*, *supporting* and *representing*, are seen as crucial co-creation activities in order to create a place to live.

The framework sheds light on the different activities that are essential in the co-creation of a place to live. Since the activities are interrelated and reinforces each other, all activities are equally important. If one activity is weak or not existing, the entire co-creation process will be affected and suffer. It is therefore necessary to encourage all six activities and develop structure and systems to facilitate more of these activities. The framework is useful for analyzing why, and how, things happen and are co-created but, equally important, it can be useful for understanding why certain things does *not* happen in a place. Are there any activity that is weak or non-existing? Do the residents not support initiatives and local shops and participates in events enough? Are the non-profit sector and the local media not doing their job representing the place? Or does the municipality not enable things to happen to the extent necessary? Which is the weakest link?

The municipality is often the focus in public governance studies. Even if the municipality is not the starting point in this study, the municipality is still highlighted as an important stakeholder and are believed to contribute to the co-creation of the place by the activities handling, enabling, operating, social networking and representing. The study backs earlier findings claiming that

the municipality can have an important role when it comes to leading the decentralized network of stakeholders and relationships (Thelander and Säwe, 2015) as well as setting basic constraints and rules in which interactions can take place (Klijn, 2012). However, surprisingly, the municipality is not seen as having monopoly on any of these activities. In practice, the municipality does not own the place question, rather the place is co-created through six types of activities where different groups of stakeholders play important roles. For example, the business sector can operate, handle and represent the place. This supports Löffler's (2009) argument, that governments are no longer necessarily the central actor in a societal network. Enabling, i.e. to coordinate and encourage stakeholders to be a part of the co-creation of a place to live, can thus be seen as one of the most important tasks for the municipality.

The only activity the municipality is not seen as being a part of is supporting. Supporting incorporates to participate in offered activities and events, shop in the local stores and to take responsibility for one's own action and be a role-model for others. Here the residents are emphasized. The residents have been highlighted as a particularly important stakeholder group, both within place marketing (e.g. Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013; Inch & Stuart, 2015; Taucharungroj, 2016) but also in public governance (e.g. Martin, 2009; Pestoff, 2009) and both the municipality and the residents themselves see the resident as a key stakeholder in the place context. Supporting is central in the co-creation of the place. If no one participates and supports the initiatives, there will be no long-term positive development in the place. The residents are also seen as being a part of the activities operating, representing and social networking.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Several people and institutions have been important in the development of this paper. The empirical analysis was developed during the PhD course Qualitative Data Analysis and Theorization at Lund University. I am very thankful for the valuable input from both course participants and the course leader Jens Rennstam. Likewise, I am grateful to my colleagues at Kristianstad University and their valuable comments at the research seminar hosted by the research groups GRIP and AOS. A special thanks to Giuseppe Grossi for introducing me to the public management field and for appreciated support and input.



## REFERENCES

- Alford, J., Douglas, S., Geuijen, K. & Hart, P. (2017) Ventures in public value management: introduction to the symposium. *Public Management Review*, 19(5): 589-604.
- Becker, H. S. (1998) *Tricks of the trade – How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bovaird, T. & Löffler, E. (2003) Evaluating the quality of public governance: Indicators, models and methodologies. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 69(3): 313-328.
- Bovaird, T. (2005) Public governance: balancing stakeholder power in a network society. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 71(2): 217-228.
- Bovaird, T. & Löffler, E. (2009) *Public Management and Governance*. Routledge.
- Brandsen, T. & Pestoff, V. (2006) Co-production, the third sector and the delivery of public services. *Public Management Review*, 8(4): 493-501.
- Brandsen, T. & Honingh, M. (2016) Distinguishing different types of coproduction: a conceptual analysis based on the classical definitions. *Public Administration Review*, 76(3): 427-435.
- Braun, E. (2008) *City Marketing: Towards an Integrated Approach*. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM).
- Braun, E., Kavaratzis, M. & Zenker, S. (2013) My city – my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6(1): 18–28.
- Bryson, J. (2004) What to do when stakeholders matter. Stakeholder identification and analysis techniques. *Public Management Review*, 6(1): 21-53.
- Bryson, J., Sancino, A., Benington, J. & Sorensen, E. (2017) Towards a multi-actor theory of public value co-creation. *Public Management Review*, 19(5): 640-654.
- Caldwell N. & Freire J. R. (2004) The difference between branding a country, a region and a city: Applying the Brand Box Model, *Brand Management*, 12(1): 50-61.
- Cerda-Bertomeu, M & Sarabia-Sanchez, F. (2016) Stakeholders' perceptions of place branding and the role of the public sector: An exploratory analysis. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 12(4): 299-313.
- Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing grounded theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Sage.
- Cova B. (1996) The postmodern explained to managers: implications for marketing. *Business Horizons*, 39(6): 15-23.
- Edelenbos, J., Steijn, B. & Klijn, E-H. (2010) Does democratic anchorage matter? An inquiry into the relation between democratic anchorage and outcome of Dutch environmental projects. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 40(1): 46-63.

- Gebauer, H., Johnson, M. & Enquist, B. (2010) Value co-creation as a determinant of success in public transport services. *Managing Service Quality*, 20(6): 511-530.
- Grönroos, C. (1982) An Applied Service Marketing Theory. *European Journal of Marketing*, 12(8): 588-601.
- Hair, J., Celsi M., Money, A., Samouel, P. & Page, M. (2011) *Business research methods 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, Armonk, New York: M.E.Sharpe.
- Hankinson, G. (2010) Place branding research: A cross-disciplinary agenda and the views of practitioners. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 6(4): 300–315.
- Henninger, C., Foster, C. & Alevizou, P. (2016) Stakeholder engagement in the city branding process. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 12(4): 285-298.
- Insch, A. & Florek, M. (2010) Place satisfaction of city residents: findings and implications for city branding. In Ashworth G. & Kavaratzis M., *Towards affective place brand management. Branding European cities and regions*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Insch, A. & Stuart, M. (2015) Understanding resident city brand disengagement. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 8(3): 172-186.
- Kavaratzis, M. (2004) From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1): 58-73.
- Kavaratzis, M. (2012) From “necessary evil” to necessity: stakeholders’ involvement in place branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 5(1): 7–19.
- Kemp, E., Childers, C. Y. & Williams, K. H. (2012) Place branding: creating self-brand connections and brand advocacy. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 21(7): 508-515.
- Klijin, E. H. (2012) New public Management and governance: a comparison in Levi-Faur, D. (Eds), *Oxford Handbook of Governance*, Oxford: University Press.
- Källström, L. (2016) Rethinking the branding context for municipalities –From municipal dominance to resident dominance. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 20(2): 77-96.
- Källström, L. & Ekelund, C. (2016) What can a municipality offer to its residents? Value propositions and interaction in a place context. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 10(1): 24-37.
- Lindstedt, J. (2015) A deliberately emergent strategy – a key to successful city branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 8(2): 90-102.
- Löffler, E. (2009) Public governance in a network society. In Bovaird, T. & Löffler, E. *Public Management and Governance*. Routledge.
- Martin, S. (2009) Engaging with citizens and other stakeholders. In Bovaird, T. & Löffler, E. *Public Management and Governance*. Routledge.

- Martinez, N. M. (2016) Towards a network place branding through multiple stakeholders and based on cultural identities. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 9(1): 73-90.
- Melik, R. & Krabben, E. (2016) Co-production of public space: policy translations from New York City to the Netherlands. *TPR*, 87(2): 136-158.
- Merz, M. A., He, Y. & Vargo, S. L. (2009) The evolving brand logic: a service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37: 328–344.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, M. A. & Saldaña, J. (2014) *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Sage.
- Niedomysl, T. & Jonasson, M. (2012) Towards a theory of place marketing, *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 5(3): 223-230.
- Nisco, A., Riviezzo, A. & Napolitano, M. (2008) The role of stakeholders in town centre management: guidelines for identification and analysis. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 1(2): 166-176.
- Ostrom, E. (1996) Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World Development*, 24(6): 1073-1087.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, Sage, Thousands Oaks, CA.
- Pestoff, V. (2009) Towards a paradigm of democratic participation: citizen participation and co-production of personal social services in Sweden. *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 80(2): 197-224.
- Peters, B. G. & Pierre, J. (1998) Governance without government? Rethinking public administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 8(2): 223-243.
- Rennstam, J. & Wästerfors, D. (2015) *Från stoff till studie. Om analysarbete i kvalitativ forskning*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Rozhkov, K. L. & Skriabina, N. I. (2015) Places, users, and place uses: a theoretical approach to place market analysis. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 8(2): 103-122.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003) Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15(1): 85-109.
- Ruzzier, M. & Petek N. (2011) The importance of diverse stakeholders in place branding: The case of “I feel Slovenia”. *An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 23(1): 49-60.
- Skinner, H. (2008) The emergence and development of place marketing’s confused identity. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24(9): 915-928.
- SKL (2017) Available at:  
<https://skl.se/demokratiledningstyrning/medborgardialogdelaktighet/medborgardialog.372.html>

- Swedberg, R. (2012) Theorizing in sociology and social science: turning to the context of discovery. *Theoretical Sociology*, 41: 1-40.
- Taecharungroj, V. (2016) City ambassadorship and citizenship behaviours. Modeling resident behaviours that help cities grow. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 9(3): 331-350.
- Thelander, Å. & Säwe, F. (2015) The challenge of internal stakeholder support for co-creational branding strategy. *Public Relations Inquiry* 4(3): 323-341.
- Vargo, S. L. & Lusch, R. F. (2004) Evolving to a New Dominant Logic of Marketing, *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1): 1-17.
- Verschuere, B., Brandsen, T. & Pestoff, V. (2012) Co-production: The state of the art in research and the future agenda. *Voluntas*, 23: 1083-1101.
- Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J. J. M. & Tummers L. G. (2015) A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, 17(9): 1333-1357.
- Waeraas, A., Björnå, H. & Moldenaes, T. (2015) Place, organization, democracy: three strategies for municipal branding. *Public Management Review*, 17(9): 1282-1304.
- Warnaby, G. (2009) Towards a service-dominant place marketing logic. *Marketing Theory* 9(4): 403-423.
- Zenker, S. & Martin, N. (2011) Measuring success in place marketing and branding. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 7(1): 32-41.
- Zenker, S., Petersen, S. & Aholt A. (2013) The Citizen Satisfaction Index (CSI): Evidence for a Four Basic Factor Model in a German Sample. *Cities*, 31: 156-164.

## APPENDIX 1:

### Constructed typology of the stakeholder activities in place co-creation.

Activity	Code	Main types of stakeholders perceived as being responsible and able to perform the activity
<b>Handling</b>	Prioritizing	The municipality (the organization, public officials and politicians), Business sector.
	Deciding	
	Investing in large projects and the place	
	Taking responsibility for the place	
	Coordinating things	
	Developing the place	
<b>Enabling</b>	Uniting different actors and projects	The municipality (the organization, public officials and politicians), Local media.
	Assisting municipalities and initiatives	
	Creating opportunities and conditions for development	
	Strengthening good initiatives	
	Lubricating	
	Encouraging municipalities	
	Influencing the decision makers	
	Cooperating with other municipalities, regions and private actors	
<b>Operating</b>	Encouraging development	The municipality (the organization, public officials and politicians), Business sector, Non-profit sector, Residents.
	Making things happen	
	Offering something to do	
	Offering events, activities and culture experience	
	Offering good public service	
	Creating job opportunities	
	Making the city beautiful	
<b>Social Networking</b>	Starting new things	The municipality (the organization, public officials and politicians), Church, Elite sport teams, Non-profit sector, Residents.
	Creating meeting points	
	Bringing people together	
	Listening to other stakeholders	
	Linking together the city	
	Working with integration	
<b>Supporting</b>	Creating fellowship	Residents.
	Spreading positive vibrations being positive and open	
	Participating in activities and events	
	Offering time and effort, in for example associations	
	Supporting local shops	
	Taking personal responsibility for ones action, respecting each other, moral courage	
<b>Representing</b>	Not destroying things	The municipality (the organization, public officials and politicians), Elite sport teams, Non-profit sector, Business sector, Local media, Residents.
	Role-modelling	
	Talking positive about the place, good examples and stories	
	Strengthening the profile of the place	
	Spreading news and information	
	Marketing the place	
	Making the place famous	
	Building pride for the city	