Creative cities and innovation through the co-production of public services: an analysis based on location theory

ABSTRACT
This theoretical essay aims to analyze, in the light of location theory, if creative cities are more likely to innovate in the public sector by promoting the co-production of public services. Based on a seminal and recent literature and on the authors' own analytical procedures, the results of the research indicated that innovation in the public sector can be further stimulated by encouraging the co-production of public services in creative cities. Therefore, creative cities would be places more likely to innovate and develop economically, as they are committed to involving different social actors in this process. This work contributes to understanding a territorial factor (local public management aimed at generating a creative culture) that favors the co-production of public services and their respective impacts (innovation for territorial economic development), which is a theoretical gap in the literature on the subject. Furthermore, the notes in this article show that co-production is a practice that leverages innovation in the public sector and therefore must be encouraged in public management, thus reinforcing the institutional commitment taken on by creative cities.

Keywords: Creative cities. Co-production of public services. Public sector innovation. Location theory. Territorial economic development.

RESUMO
O presente ensaio teórico tem o objetivo de analisar, à luz da teoria da localização, se as cidades criativas são mais passíveis a inovar no setor público por promover a coprodução de serviços públicos. Partindo de uma literatura seminal e recente e de procedimentos analíticos próprios dos autores, os resultados da pesquisa indicaram que a inovação no setor público pode ser mais estimulada pelo fomento à coprodução de serviços públicos das cidades criativas. Dessa forma, as cidades criativas seriam locais mais propensos a inovar e a se desenvolver economicamente, por ter o compromisso de envolver diferentes atores sociais nesse processo. Este trabalho contribui para compreender um fator territorial (gestão pública local voltada a gerar uma cultura criativa) que favorece a coprodução de serviços públicos e seus respectivos impactos (inovação para o desenvolvimento económico territorial), que é uma lacuna teórica da literatura sobre o tema. Ademais, os apontamentos deste artigo mostram que a coprodução é uma prática que alavancja a inovação no setor público e, por isso, deve ser fomentada na gestão pública, reforçando assim o compromisso institucional assumido pelas cidades criativas.


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INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, public administration has become more and more decentralized and open to social participation, thus leading to a process of transforming the characteristics of public policy construction, especially through the sharing of responsibilities and joint action involving society and government (SALM, 2014). Therefore, public policies would not only be a result of state interference, but also of the influence of several actors, both governmental or not (ALMEIDA, 2023; CHAEBO; MEDEIROS, 2017; WEAVER, 2019).

With that in mind, co-production demonstrates to be an approach that represents this new context, revealing that civil society also works for the constitution of public services (ALMEIDA, 2023; OSTROM, 1996; VERSCHUERE; BRANDSEN; PESTOFF, 2012). More than realizing the influence of non-state actors in public policies, co-production is also seen as a practice that leads to innovation. Edelmann and Mergel (2021) and Radnor et al. (2014) indicate that co-production facilitates the co-creation of ideas, which can generate innovation in the public sector.

For Emmendoerfer (2019), the co-production of public services brings more legitimacy to innovation in the public sector, due to its ability to be open to new demands and to the propositions of citizens and other stakeholders. However, in a more direct manner, co-production would not be something natural or that happens spontaneously. According to Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff (2012), the citizens need to have concrete opportunities and be motivated to participate in public services. Such a conception indicates that some arrangements of public administration can be more prone to co-production and innovation resulting from social participation than others.

Therefore, this essay highlights creative cities for believing in their ability to promote an environment addressed to co-productive innovation. According to Alsayel, Jong and Fransen (2022) and Landry (2008), creative cities are the ones that encourage creative culture, with mechanisms that interact several local actors and use their diversity of ideas for innovation. These characteristics are related to the requirements cities should fulfill to be recognized as creative, considering the criteria to participate in the creative cities network conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Therefore, it is believed that creative cities can be more prone to innovation for stimulating creativity through a collective effort. Such a consideration started with the location theory, which indicates that territorial factors, both tangible and intangible, can explain the disparities of the economic development of places (DALLABRIDA, 2017), which have a direct relationship with their ability for innovation (AUDY, 2017; SCHUMPETER, 1982). In the case of creative cities, the understanding is that their management model, more directed to collective creativity, can mobilize innovation in the public sector. So, this essay asks the following: under the optics of location theory, are creative cities more prone to innovating in the public sector for institutionally encouraging the co-production of public services?
In this sense, this essay analyzes — using seminal and recent literature, besides the specific analytical procedures of the authors — if creative cities are more likely to innovate in the public sector due to their commitment to involve different social actors in this process. Therefore, this study contributes with the understanding of a spatial peculiarity (local public administration aimed at stimulating creativity) that can facilitate the innovative co-production of public services. This is related to the theoretical gap identified by Gouveia Júnior, Bezerra and Cavalcante (2023), that literature needs to advance in the understanding of the effects of co-production facing its mode of administration.

As a practical implication, this article may reveal, especially to city administrators, that the co-production of public services favors innovation and, therefore, should be stimulated. Besides, it would reinforce the institutional commitment taken on by creative cities — of promoting innovation and the development of the territory based on its actors and its culture (LANDRY, 2008).

CREATIVE CITIES

Aiming at fighting the social and economic crises that are recurrent in the global scenario, cities have adopted strategic optimization resources based on creativity (EMMENDOERFER, 2018). So, they have become dynamic places, in constant adaptation regarding economy, culture and the quality of life of the citizens (FLORIDA, 2011; HOWKINS, 2013; LANDRY, 2013). The concept of creative cities emerges from this context, which composes the core of creative industries (ARCOS-PUMAROLA; PAQUIN; SITGES, 2023). And this is because creative industries are constituted by a “group of leading sectors whose core comprehends specific activities, whose base is creativity and intellectual, artistic and cultural content” (FEDERAÇÃO DAS INDÚSTRIAS DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 2008, p. 24).

The term “creative industries” is configured as a new productive model that matches economy and culture based on creative practices (FLOREA; SAVA; MARCU, 2022; ROSA, 2021). Such a model includes goods and services that are constituted “in a dynamic of appreciation, protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions”, aiming at ensuring originality, strength and power to local growth (BRASIL, 2011, p. 34). This occurs by the generation of work and income, especially through social inclusion (BASTOS; CARDOSO; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

When discussing the conceptions of creative industries, which are the base for the foundation of creative cities, it is also worth understanding what creativity is as a socio-spatial value. According to Amabile (2012), creativity relates abilities and skills, elevating the idea of doing something new as way towards progress. Creativity, when associated with space, would be an effort for the positive transformation of places (RICHARDS; DUIF, 2018). Complementing this view of positive change, Furtado (2008) indicates that creativity would be a necessary instrument for human organization.

The concept of creative cities began to be discussed more recently, and, in the past decades, has aroused interest of several countries, in different continents.
Among the factors that contributed with the development of this new model of urban organization, Reis (2011) highlights the “passing the baston” from the socioeconomic industrial paradigm to that of knowledge. Economic competitiveness between cities that depend on innovation has also promoted this process, with the understanding that the more creative a population, the more pulsating its economy (REIS, 2011).

Based on these considerations, what would be a creative city? For Lerner (2009), what makes cities creative is collective commitment. According to the author, this broader commitment would be based on three principles addressed to local quality of life: solidarity, mobility and sustainability. Other reasons worth mentioning are the identity and the feeling of belonging to a place, as well as social diversity, be it of age groups, income range, uses of the territory etc. (LERNER, 2009).

Creative cities are presented by dynamic environments that can produce, through their inhabitants, the integration of several sectors, be them economic, social or cultural (FLORIDA, 2011; LANDRY, 2013; REIS, 2012). According to Cerisola and Panzera (2021, p. 1, our translation), the “[...] creative character of cities is considered as a strategic force and an opportunity that can reverberate, favoring the economic system of all regions where they are located”. In this sense, Alsayel, Jong and Fransen (2022) understand that, despite also depending on the context of administering each of them, creative cities tend to stimulate innovation and, consequently, economic growth.

Lerner (2009) defends that the clearest characteristic of creative cities is the integration between spaces and people, the natural and the built environment, and even between different generations (such as the past, the present and the future). Landry (2008), on the other hand, understands that a common element between these cities is the emphasis on internal culture towards local economic development. This author also considers that these cities promote the participation of citizens, thus producing an environment that stimulates the diversity of ideas regarding innovation.

Another point for discussion in relation to creative cities, besides their concept, is how they are identified as such. Nowadays, one of the main ways to identify creative cities is through the Creative Cities Network (UCCN – UNESCO). The UCCN was created in 2004 aiming at strengthening the cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable development in economic, social, cultural, environmental, political and ethical aspects, both internationally and locally.

The UCCN comprehends seven creative fields: i) crafts and folk art; ii) design; iii) film; iv) gastronomy; v) literature; vi) media arts; and vii) music (UNESCO, 2023). According to UNESCO (2023), UCCN is comprised of 246 cities, from 72 countries. The cities in UCCN are committed to stimulating the participation of several local actors towards innovation, using governance mechanisms. Besides, the cities in UCCN propose to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the 2030 agenda, of the United Nations (UN).
The 2030 Agenda was developed by the UN in 2015, with 193 countries (UN, 2003). It represents the global guidelines for sustainable development, established by 17 SDGs and 169 targets (UN, 2023). The integration of these SDGs with UCCN aims at building efforts considering governance that meets the global socioeconomic needs (GRUPO DE TRABALHO DA SOCIEDADE CIVIL PARA A AGENDA 2030, 2019).

Therefore, regardless of the economic field that is promoted, it is possible to say that creative cities are the ones that mobilize creative culture, including the action of several actors, both governmental or not (LANDRY, 2008). So, the connection between these cities with the co-production of public services becomes clearer, since they try to integrate the State with other stakeholders (civil society, the market etc.) for the co-creation of actions that have public ends.

**CO-PRODUCTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES**

The co-production of public services began to be discussed at the end of the 1970s, in a workshop about theory and analysis of public policies (NABATCHI; SANCINO; SICILIA, 2017; OSTROM, 1996). According to Ostrom (1996), the initial goal of co-production was to oppose to hegemonic theories of urban governance, which reinforced the leadership of centralizing policies. Despite its promising beginning, the discussion about co-production decreased with the years, and has only become more visible in the past decades (CHAEBO; MEDEIROS, 2017; NABATCHI; SANCINO; SICILIA, 2017). According to Chaebo e Medeiros (2017), this new interest came from the understanding that citizens have been more and more active in the production of public services.

Alford (2014) corroborated this perspective indicating that the co-production of public services is essential to encourage citizen participation. Osborne, Radnor and Strokosch (2016) believe that co-production is a public administration practice, claiming that any sort of multiple involvement in public policies, between State and citizens, configures it.

Co-production understands that the most ordinary producer of public policies is the State (in its several representations), and citizens are their extraordinary producers (OSTROM, 1996). In this sense, co-production shows that society also influences the result of public services, and these services are not only managed by the government and executed by bureaucrats (ALMEIDA; EMMENDOERFER, 2022; TAMBOVTSEV; ROZHDESTVENSKAIA, 2023; VERSCHUERE; BRANDSEN; PEDESTOFF, 2012).

According to Edelmann and Mergel (2021), co-production is essential for innovation in the public sector, for being open to the diversity of ideas and stimulating co-creation. Besides, it allows many social problems to be identified and solved through more complex strategies that are reflected upon collectively (AMANN; SLEIGH, 2021; BEDNARSKA-OLEJNICZAK; OLEJNICZAK; KLÍMOVÁ, 2021; PILL, 2022).

It is worth to mention that, originally, co-production was used to represent the fact that different actors interfered in public services (ALMEIDA, 2023; OSTROM,
1996). However, throughout the years, co-production was also used as a perspective to analyze public policies (CHAEBÖ; MEDEIROS, 2017). This happens because public services are materializations of the public policies, among their other forms of manifestation (MORAES, 1999).

Along with this consideration, it is necessary to distinguish the use of co-production as the practice of a theory from co-creation itself. Co-production as practice are the actions that effectively involve non-governmental actors in the production of public services. As theory, co-production would be lenses that see and explain that public policies are built collectively. These two uses of co-production complement one another, because theory is only justified if an event takes place in practice.

Considering its distinction and relationship with co-creation, co-production can be seen as a practice with great potential for stimulating it (RADNOR et al., 2014; STEINMUELLER, 2013). So, we can infer that co-creation is the generation of ideas collectively, which often emerges from the interaction of actors in the administration of public policies, that is, the co-production of public services.

It is also important to clarify that co-productive practices do not occur naturally, and not always should be seen as advantageous for having substantial benefits (OSTROM, 1996). This author shows that many circumstances need to be pondered for that, such as: the existence of laws that guarantee social participation; if there is technology that allows collective participation; and if the different actors involved in the process take on the mutual commitment and dispose of some credit. Therefore, it is observed that co-production requires a convenient environment to be perpetuated.

In that matter, Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff (2012) point out that the participation of non-state actors in co-production is a result of the combination between individual motivation and naturalness of involvement. Van Eijk and Steen (2016) indicate that many factors can facilitate the involvement of citizens in co-production, such as the importance of the problem or issue to be resolved, be it from the social or the personal point of view.

Such considerations make us question, especially for studying the articulation with creative cities, which public management model can favor co-production and create an environment that is more fertile for innovation in the public sector. That is, why do creative cities encourage co-production, and, because of that, are more likely to innovate in the public field? In the next topic, this matter will be debated.

**INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

Innovation is an essential element for economic growth and progress (AUDY, 2017; CAPPELLESCO; RAIMUNDO; THOMÉ, 2021; MINEIRO; SOUZA; CASTRO, 2021; SCHUMPFETER, 1982). It emerges from an initiative, either modest or pretentious, that originates something new, which can be related to processes, products, practices etc. (MIRANDA et al., 2019; SIMANTOB; LIPPI, 2003). Innovation can be both incremental, with minor improvements in relation to what already exists, and disruptive, bringing a new technological landscape to social practices (AUDY, 2017; SCHUMPFETER, 1982).
According to Furtado (2008), the basic guideline of innovation has always been to broaden human perspectives and possibilities. With that in mind, it is possible to observe a similarity between the definitions of creativity and innovation, not as synonyms, but as complementary concepts. Creativity is associated with the effort to create good ideas, whereas innovation would be a result expected from such an effort, that is, the application of good ideas. With that, Furtado (2008) defends that innovation is a result of social creativity. This facilitates the understanding of what innovation in the public sector is. However, before dealing with this concept in particular, it is important to explain how it appeared.

According to Emmendoerfer (2019), innovation in the public sector became a topic of international relevance after the XX century, due to the extensive use of technological measures to improve public administration. In the XXI century, innovation in the public sector stood out due to the need of the State do adapt to the demands imposed by a connected world, including in relation to policies and public services (EMMENDOERFER, 2019).

This necessity is very much related to the process of globalization, which enabled the connection between people and organizations (with the internet and devices such as notebooks and smartphones), which was much harder in the past (CASTELLS, 2009). Besides this need for adaptation, innovation in the public sector came to reduce fiscal expenses and to qualify the democratic system, so that public services could have more social credibility (CAVALCANTE; CUNHA, 2017).

The proposal of innovation in the public sector is to give new and good use to public resources through improvements in public administration processes and the products generated by them (public policies) (OSBORNE; BROWN, 2005). Therefore, innovation in the public sector can be understood as the use of incremental or totally new ideas, which bring some public value to society (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2013; MULGAN, 2007). For Emmendoerfer (2019, p. 22), innovation in the public sector is:

[...] an idea (new, improved or renewed), systematized for the context of its application, with the objective of solving a public interest problem, whose leadership is exercised, at least initially, by people who demonstrate entrepreneur behavior in public administration.

The understanding about entrepreneur behavior is that of people who, in specific moments, propose to take calculated risks, with initiative to generate innovative proposals (EMMENDOERFER, 2019). Therefore, entrepreneurship ends up being a latent characteristic of each individual, which can be exercised or not. It is worth to ponder that, in this study, innovation is considered as “the use of the idea”, and not the process that originated it, which is closer to the concept of creativity.

Considering the relationship between innovation in public service and co-production, it starts from the conception that co-production can generate more legitimacy to new ideas that are created and used, since it starts with
social pretensions (EMMENDOERFER, 2019). Another aspect mentioned by this author is that, when established by different actors, co-production can maintain innovative actions in several government mandates. Besides, co-production is considered to be a fertile practice for innovation, for opening up to multiple perceptions and experiences (EDELMANN; MERGEL, 2021; RADNOR et al., 2014; STEINMUELLER, 2013).

Despite that, it is possible to say that, for encouraging creativity by the interaction of multiple actors, creative cities are more prone to innovation. Creativity is an essential attribute for innovation and growth of a specific location. Creativity contributes with human organization and can help least developed countries to break away from the technological dependence of developed countries (FURTADO, 2008). The “creativity” factor was also important to explain the rise of small cities, which were then considered as irrelevant in comparison to more populous ones (RICHARDS; DUIF, 2018).

Therefore, it is observed that a public administration that aims at socially promoting creativity – characteristic of creative cities – is considered as a differential, since it indicates the predisposition of a place to innovate itself and develop economically more than others. This will be discussed in detail in the next topic, through the location theory, which tries to understand and explain the reasons for the economic disparities of territories.

DISCUSSIONS IN THE LIGHT OF LOCATION THEORY

Here, we will discuss, through the location theory, how the incentive to co-produced creativity can be a factor that favors innovation in the public sector and the economic development of a territory. According to Dallabrida (2017), the basic principles of location theories (or classic spatial theories) are the elaboration of explanatory models that can identify the reasons for territorial disparities, especially economic ones (DALLABRIDA, 2017).

Besides this more common element, location theories are dismembered in more specific points of analysis. When verifying this variation, Dallabrida (2017) divided them in three groups of models: the industrial location models, which determine the location of production as a way to reduce costs and transport in industries; the growth poles, circular and cumulative causation and chain effects, which highlight sectoral interdependence as causes for the location of companies, and, consequently, regional development; and the models that incorporate dynamic external economies, starting from the assumption that the reasons to invest in a place and its growth are continuously changing.

Not going further in each of these groups, but from the central perspective of the theory, it is valid to ask: what would such growth or development that explains spatial inequalities be? Therefore, it is necessary to elucidate which concept of growth or development — economic, social, environmental etc. — this work refers to, also to delimit which implication of innovation in creative cities has been analyzed here by the location theory.
According to Bresser-Pereira (2014), it is important to distinguish development and economic growth from human development and progress. Whereas the former development would be more associated with improvements in life status, coming from the process of capital accumulation, human development would include five broader objectives:

[...] development of safety (more peace between nations and less crime), economic development (welfare), political development (more political equality and participation in the government), social development (more economic equality), and environmental development (more protection for the environment) (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2014, p. 58).

Bresser-Pereira (2014) considers that one way of measuring human development and progress is through the Human Development Index (HDI), which, in general, assesses the per capita income of the country based on its gross domestic product (GDP), on the life expectancy of people and schooling rate. Despite being criticized for not representing an adequate verification of this type of development, HDI is considered as a very important indicator to compare realities between countries (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2014). Development and economic growth are measured by per capita income itself, which is also an indicator for that purpose (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2014).

Based on this short analysis, what development would be more adequate to indicate as being a result of innovation? This line should be drawn so there is no chance of confusing concepts, which is something many authors do when approaching these two types of development as synonyms (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2014).

This paper discusses the role of innovation for development and economic growth, since it is more associated with location theories (DALLABRIDA, 2017). In spite of that, this study does not ignore other possible positive impacts of innovation for a specific territory; it is just a profile to relate innovation with the spatial disparities investigated by the location theory.

In this sense, presenting some studies that handle innovation and its spatial variations, it is possible to explain the reason why creative cities, with co-production, are more prone to economic development. For Cima and Amorim (2007), innovation interferes deeply in the diffusion of economic growth and in the efficiency between regions and sectors. Besides, the authors indicate that economic growth is presented in the cities-regions by the expansion of their central limits, through the creation of specialization centers that are willing to innovate.

Casali, Silva and Carvalho (2010), also starting from a location theory (neoschumpeteriana), show that the economic imbalance between the five Brazilian regions (North, Northeast, Southeast, South and Midwest) is explained by their technological discrepancy. In their research, these authors observed the importance for less developed regions to advance in the process of innovation and internal co-creation of technology, in accordance with their available resources:
it is extremely important that the North, Northeast and Midwest regions begin their own research, aiming at technological and economic development (CASALI; SILVA; CARVALHO, 2010, p. 548).

The technological development of the regions is a consequence, so that new technologies can be developed, improved and adapted to existing technologies, physical and human productive resources of each region (CASALI; SILVA; CARVALHO, 2010, p. 549).

By specifically analyzing the city of Bushehr, in Iran, Tayebeh et al. (2023) identified that the creative factors of the studied territory were essential for its development, especially because they favored innovation. The work of Daldanise and Clemente (2022), based on the case of Naples, in Italy, also indicated the creativity promoted by different social groups as a differential element for the development of the place, especially for the valorization of their material and immaterial patrimony.

According to Foster (2022), even though co-creation is often neglected in the economic development process, it is central for that and needs to be part of urban planning. Co-creation and co-production enable the use of ideas that can generate economic benefits, especially because they involve people with different demands and perspectives, aiming at generating innovative strategies for the territory (EDELMANN; MERGEL, 2021; EHRET; OLANIYAN, 2023).

With that, it is possible to indicate that innovation, resulting from an endogenous movement that considers, in the first place, the peculiarities and visions of local actors (cultural, resources etc.), is an essential element for the economic development of a territory, and the analyzed parts here are the cities. According to Audy (2017) and Schumpeter (1982), innovation can be understood as a vector for economic development.

Dallabrida, Covas and Covas (2017) also believe that innovation, when connected to sustainability and social integration, leads to the economic development of a territory. According to these authors, sustainability and social integration are inserted as attributes that prolong development. Because of the importance of social integration, it is observed that co-production is essential for a continuous effort addressed to innovation and economic development.

Besides this benefit of co-production, which favors innovation and economic development, Koch and Hauknes (2005) emphasize that the collective decision making of what will be innovated is essential to weight on the needs of the group and the achievement of legitimacy. Therefore, co-production can be seen as a practice that boosts innovation and the economic development that results from it.

So, we can infer — in the light of location theories — that the incentive to co-productive innovation in creative cities is an essential factor for economic development. That, together with numberless other factors (such as natural resources, logistic position etc.), can help to explain the reasons for economic-territorial disparities, especially among creative cities and those that are not recognized as such, given the proper proportions for comparative ends.
FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this essay, it was possible to observe that creative cities, due to their stimulus to co-production and co-creation of public services, are more prone to innovation and economic development than cities without the same institutional commitment. Despite that, it is not possible to state that cities without the title of “creative” do not co-produce innovation nor make strictly more limited efforts towards economic development. The only indication here is that — in the light of the location theory — the model of administration of creative cities, directed at promoting innovation in the public sector by multiple actors, is a positive and differential factor towards economic development in the territory.

So, more specifically, this consideration will depend on each studied case. Therefore, it is relevant that further studies, especially theoretical-empirical ones, analyze how the institutional commitment assumed by specific cities that participate in creative city networks has been effective — thus verifying if the co-produced creativity has been contextually stimulated. Besides, it would be pertinent to analyze the potential implications of creative cities beyond economic development, relating them to other essential dimensions from the sustainable point of view, such as social, environmental, cultural, political dimensions etc.

However, even with its characters of introductory debate, this essay has brought significant contributions. Theoretically, its considerations enabled to identify a territorial characteristic that favors the innovative co-production of public services, which is public administration that is committed to encouraging creativity by multiple local actors. That is related to the theoretical gap identified by Gouveia Júnior, Bezerra and Cavalcante (2023), showing that the literature needs to continuously discuss the effects of co-production of public goods and services by a specific context of the administration.

As a contribution to the public territory governance, this study shows that co-production should be promoted by city administrators, since it favors innovation in the public field and, consequently, territorial economic development. Therefore, this study also justifies the proposal of creative cities: to stimulate an innovative culture, involving society as a whole (LANDRY, 2008).

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