

THE MEDIA AS A PROMOTER OF THE CO-CREATION AND INNOVATION OF SERVICES IN VÕRU COUNTY IN ESTONIA

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the co-creation of new initiatives in the communities of Võru County in Estonia from the perspectives of media reflection and communication. A social hackathon was used as a method for co-creation, bringing stakeholders together to develop innovative service solutions. Data were collected during three social hackathons in 2018 and 2019 and included media coverage (n = 120) and opinion notes (n = 300). Findings indicate that media publications reflected the problems of vulnerable groups; the media's role was to support the co-creation processes by creating a stage for active citizens to share ideas and discuss solutions.

INTRODUCTION

According to Kalvet (2007)¹, Estonia is known for its rapidly developing service economy sector and the introduction of innovative applications in government, especially in the field of digital technologies where a technology-based information society is being promoted. E-Governance is a strategic choice for Estonia to increase the well-being of its population by enabling the availability of e-services to citizens (Government of the Republic of Estonia, 2018)². Although the prognosis for the economy and the expectations of development prospects are optimistic, expert assessments indicate that Estonia's most serious economic problems remain a shortage of skilled labor, low innovation, and lack of international competitiveness (Estonian Institute of Economic Research, 2019)³.

The Estonian Regional Development Strategy 2014-2020 (Estonian Ministry of the Interior, 2014, p. 19)⁴ indicated that regional differences are quite large in Estonia; moreover, meeting regional policy goals aimed at providing employment, quality services, and a living environment that enables people to engage in diverse activities to improve well-being has remained challenging. Local governments are fragmented and public services based on the needs of the citizens are not yet well-developed (Tõnisson, 2016)⁵. In 2017, administrative reform took place in Estonia to ensure the quality of the provision of public services—79 municipalities were formed from 213 to strengthen the capacity to provide high-quality public services, increase competitiveness, and establish more uniform regional development (Administrative Reform Act, 2016)⁶. Furthermore, in 2016 the work ability reform was implemented with the aim of focusing on a person's ability to work, i.e., what the person is capable of doing, instead of focusing on the person's disability, as was the case prior to this reform (The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, 2016)⁷.

Administrative reform has been considered to yield positive results. For example, local governments may have more money to provide better services and greater decision-making power, therefore enabling larger and more capable local governments—both in terms of human and financial resources. Communities must be listened to, and thus villages' and peripheral

¹ Kalvet, T. (2007). The Estonian Information Society Developments Since the 1990s. *PRAXIS Working Paper No. 29*. Tallinn: Praxis Centre for Policy Studies. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/87db/19146355206e5c97881074c9b8b9db13c32d.pdf>

² Government of the Republic of Estonia. (2018). *Digital Agenda 2020 for Estonia*. https://www.mkm.ee/sites/default/files/digitalagenda2020_final.pdf

³ Estonian Institute of Economic Research. (2019). *Konjunktuur 1 (208)*. Tallinn. <https://docplayer.ee/151506127-Konjunktuur-nr-1-208-2019-m%C3%A4rts.html>

⁴ Estonian Ministry of the Interior. (2014). *Estonian Regional Development Strategy 2014-2020*. Tallinn. https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumentid/eesti_regionaalarengu_strateegia_2014-2020.pdf

⁵ Tõnisson, H. (2016). *Explanatory Memorandum to the draft Administrative Reform Act*. Estonian Ministry of Finance.

⁶ Administrative Reform Act (2016). *RT I, 21.06.2016, 1*. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/514072016004/consolide>

⁷ The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. (2016). *Work ability reform*. <https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng/content/work-ability-reforms>

rights should be established more strongly in the law (Aas et al., 2018, p. 691)⁸. Communities should also be more visible and able to voice opinions on how to enhance the lives of people living within them. One of the tools for doing so is the media. The media has a key role in bringing the voice of people into the co-creation process of services to strengthen their communities.

The study presented in the current paper was conducted as part of the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 project, Co-creation of Social Service Innovation in Europe (CoSIE), carried out in one region of the country—Võrumaa (Võru County in Estonia). The CoSIE project, as an international consortium, aims to introduce innovative ways of social service development. The Estonian role in the project is to develop an effective development method for the start-up scene, combining it with the strong social values of the welfare sector (CoSIE, 2019)⁹.

The topic of service development in this project is primarily related to two dimensions. The first dimension relates to improving the living environment in Võrumaa so that it better responds to the needs of residents. The second is to develop and design new ideas and services, look for new forms of cooperation, and provide modern, smart, and operational solutions to services that are needed by the population. The target groups of citizens who have been at the center of the CoSIE project in the development of services are the elderly, individuals with special needs, the unemployed, patient groups, and people with difficulties coping in everyday life. An important aspect of this development has been the involvement of local government officials, institutions, politicians, entrepreneurs, village elders, active community leaders, volunteers, and experts who are renowned in their fields, including IT developers, marketing specialists, and family doctors.

In this paper, we aim to bring together ideas from politicians, practitioners, active citizens, and researchers to illuminate how different citizen groups in the community, including politicians, specialists of public and voluntary institutions, village leaders, and voluntary activists engage in community development, planning, implementation, and evaluation activities that promote the public interest through the media. The goal of this paper is to analyze the co-creation of new services and initiatives in communities in Võrumaa in the context of media reflection and communication. We analyze media coverage through two topics: (1) media coverage as a supporter of co-creation and service innovation and (2) co-creation and engagement in Võrumaa. Specifically, the study presented in this paper seeks to answer the following research questions: Did news about local collaborative events also reach nationwide media channels (RQ 1)? Which stakeholders and how many different people were given the floor in the media coverage (RQ 2)? How did the media share the content of important topics and activities related to the project (RQ 3)? What cooperation practices and experiences were shared in the media (RQ 4)?

COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Phillips and Pittman (2009, p. 6)¹⁰ describe community development as a process which enhances the ability of the community to act collectively to build services or common activities that promote its people's welfare, including physical, environmental, cultural, social, and economic aspects. Shaw (2008)¹¹ indicated that community development is the outcome of the joint action of citizens, social workers, politicians, and other relevant parties. Dreier et al. (2014)¹² discussed community development practices as being influenced by how policymakers define the problems these initiatives aim to address. In this

⁸ Aas, A., Korb, M., & Aab, J. (2018). What Was Achieved with the Administrative Reform and what Remains to be Done? In A. S. Valner (Ed), *Administrative Reform 2017 in Estonia: Collection of Articles* (pp. 687-699). Ministry of Finance. https://haldusreform.fin.ee/statistic/sites/3/2019/01/lg_reform_eng_finale_screen.pdf

⁹ CoSIE. (2019). 'Co-Creation of Service Innovation in Europe', Available online at: <https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/> (accessed 14 June 2019).

¹⁰ Phillips, R. & Pittman, R. H. (2009). *An Introduction to Community Development*. London, UK: Routledge.

¹¹ Shaw, M. (2008). Community development and the politics of community. *Community Development Journal*, 43(1), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsl035>

¹² Dreier, P., Mollenkopf, J., & Swanstrom, T. (2014). *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty- First Century*, 3rd edition. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

context, it is important to note that the perceptions from stakeholders contribute to the conceptualization of community development (Nickels & Rivera, 2018)¹³.

Policymaking and service development is seen as the result of multi-stakeholder actions, where stakeholders collaborate and produce together for the benefit of their communities (Bovaird, 2007)¹⁴. Service users have important roles in public service delivery and implementation of community development initiatives (Kasymova & Gaynor, 2014¹⁵; Osborne et al., 2013¹⁶; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013¹⁷). Osborne and Strokosch (2013)¹⁸ emphasized that participative co-production is more efficient compared to top-down processes. Tossavainen (2016, p. 279)¹⁹ pointed out the paradigm shift from the production of value for the client to the co-creation of value *with* the client. Nickels and Rivera (2018, p. 10)²⁰ revealed that simply including citizens in community development planning is not sufficient for solving challenges in the community; rather, co-production is key for innovations to public services. As Osborne and Strokosch (2013)²¹ stated, co-production involves combining user experiences with the reality of services from the start. Various authors outlined that citizens not only provide their input on how to potentially improve the provision of services in the community, they also alter them to be better aligned with public needs and values based on their experiences. As such, enhanced co-production in the realm of community development relates to the co-creation of services and initiatives in the community (Mulgan, 2006²²; von Hippel, 2005²³). This co-creation is by nature an innovation, as the co-creation of a community creates new services that meet the needs of the population and new, valuable solutions that can be initiated and further developed in the community.

Discussing communities, “place” is a key component of community identity in general and of individual identity in particular (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996²⁴; Speller & Twigger-Ross, 2009²⁵). Place also plays a part in defining a community and shaping community identity. Gustafson (2001, p. 9)²⁶ notes that “places often become meaningful because of the respondents’ relations with people living there—friends, relatives—and the sense of community that such social relations create.” Friedland and McLeod (1999)²⁷ described community as the point where the integration of individuals’ social interactions occurs.

¹³ Nickels, A. E., & Rivera, J. D. (2018). *Community development and Public Administration Theory: Promoting Democratic Principles to Improve Communities*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-30473-4.

¹⁴ Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond Engagement and Participation: User and Community Coproduction of Public Services. *Public Administration Review* 67(5): 846–860.

¹⁵ Kasymova, J., & Gaynor, T. S. (2014). Effective Citizen Participation in Environmental Issues: What Can Local Governments Learn? *State & Local Government Review*, 46(2), 138–145.

¹⁶ Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Nasi, G. (2013). A New Theory for Public Service Management? Toward a (Public) Service-Dominant Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 43(2), 135–158.

¹⁷ Osborne, S. P. & Strokosch, K. (2013). It Take Two to Tango? Understanding the Co- production of Public Services by Integrating the Devices Management and Public Administration Perspectives. *British Journal of Management*, 24(S1), S31–S47.

¹⁸ Osborne, S. P. & Strokosch, K. (2013). It Take Two to Tango? Understanding the Co- production of Public Services by Integrating the Devices Management and Public Administration Perspectives. *British Journal of Management*, 24(S1), S31–S47.

¹⁹ Tossavainen, P. J. (2016). Co-create with Stakeholders: Action Research Approach in Service Development. *Action Research* 15(3): 276–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750316641995>

²⁰ Nickels, A. E., & Rivera, J. D. (2018). *Community development and Public Administration Theory: Promoting Democratic Principles to Improve Communities*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-30473-4.

²¹ Osborne, S. P. & Strokosch, K. (2013). It Take Two to Tango? Understanding the Co- production of Public Services by Integrating the Devices Management and Public Administration Perspectives. *British Journal of Management*, 24(S1), S31–S47.

²² Mulgan, G. P. (2006). The Process of Social Innovation. *Innovations*, 1(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1162/itgg.2006.1.2.145>

²³ von Hippel, E. (2005). *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

²⁴ Twigger-Ross, C.L. & Uzzell, D.L. (1996). Place and Identity Processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16(3), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.1996.0017>

²⁵ Speller, G.M. & Twigger-Ross, C.L. (2009). Cultural and social disconnection in the context of a changed physical environment. *Human Geography*, 91(4), 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0467.2009.00327.x>

²⁶ Gustafson, P. (2001). Meanings of place: Everyday experience and theoretical conceptualizations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2000.0185>

²⁷ Friedland, L. & McLeod, J. (1999). *Community Integration and Mass Media: A Reconsideration*. In Demers, D. & Viswanath, K. (Eds.) *Mass Media, Social Control and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Stamm (1985)²⁸ noted decades ago that in the component of “process,” social interaction was especially important in understanding how a community operated (Cohen, 1985, p. 12)²⁹, as communication plays an important role in the community development process (Rosenberry, 2018)³⁰.

CO-CREATION AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SOCIAL INNOVATION

Co-creation is defined as any act of collective creativity, i.e., creativity that is shared by two or more people (Sanders & Stappers, 2008³¹; Romero et al., 2014³²). The word is used interchangeably with user innovation or co-innovation, which comparably states that customers are involved in new product development when they act as a source of innovation to increase the value of the new product or service (Bogers et al., 2010)³³. Romero et al. (2014, p. 385)³⁴ argued that at the beginning of the era of co-creation, companies started to implement a user-centered approach where users served as subjects while performing specific tasks and providing feedback. This was followed by a participatory approach where users were seen as partners who contributed to the development process by providing their expertise in early design phases (Sanders & Stappers, 2008)³⁵. Steen and Tournas (2018, p. 81)³⁶ indicated that co-creating and creating together are themes that join all co-creators of services, including service providers, users, decision-makers, organizers, and those in need—it is the involvement of civil society and the voluntary involvement of all parties in the process of developing services and creating innovative solutions.

Service users—once regarded as passive consumers, and then later rational customers—have evolved to being seen as an inevitable part of the service process and interact with professional staff as active co-producers (Fledderus, 2016, p. 12)³⁷. Steen and Tuurnas (2018)³⁸ explained that the evolving relations between professional staff depend on all the co-producing parties. Therefore, citizen involvement not only concerns questions regarding citizens but also regards how public professionals view themselves and their responsibilities in relation to citizens (Thomas, 1999, p. 83)³⁹.

Voluntariness is a crucial keyword here, as co-creation takes place on a voluntary basis (Romero et al., 2014)⁴⁰. Citizens’ role in the process of creating new services or initiatives is extremely relevant (Hoyer et al., 2010)⁴¹ as they are more conscious about

²⁸ Stamm, K. R. (1985). *Newspaper Use and Community Ties*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

²⁹ Cohen, A. (1985). *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester, UK: Ellis Horwood Ltd.

³⁰ Rosenberry, J. (2018). Community Media and Identity in Ireland. Routledge, ISBN: 978- 1- 138- 30434- 5 (hbk), pp. 4 -15.

³¹ Sanders E. B.-N, & Stappers, P.J. (2008). *Co-creation and the new landscapes of design*, CoDesign, 4(1), 5–18.

³² Romero, C.L., Constantinides, E., & Brünink, L. (2014). Creation: Consumer Integration in Social Media Based Product and Service Development. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 383-396.

³³ Bogers, M., Afuah, A., & Bastian, B. (2010). Users as Innovators: A Review, Critique, and Future Research Directions. *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 857–875. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309353944>

³⁴ Romero, C.L., Constantinides, E., & Brünink, L. (2014). Creation: Consumer Integration in Social Media Based Product and Service Development. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 383-396.

³⁵ Sanders E. B.-N, & Stappers, P.J. (2008). *Co-creation and the new landscapes of design*, CoDesign, 4(1), 5–18.

³⁶ Steen, T. & Tournas, S. (2018). The Roles of the professional in Co-Production and Co-creation processes. In T. Brandsen, T. Steen, B. Verschuere (Eds). *Co-Production and Co-Creation Engaging Citizens in Public Services*. Taylor and Francis Group.

³⁷ Fledderus, J. (2016). *User Co-Production of Public Service Delivery: Effects on Trust*. Dissertation. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

³⁸ Steen, T. & Tournas, S. (2018). The Roles of the professional in Co-Production and Co-creation processes. In T. Brandsen, T. Steen, B. Verschuere (Eds). *Co-Production and Co-Creation Engaging Citizens in Public Services*. Taylor and Francis Group.

³⁹ Thomas, J. C. (1999). Bringing the Public into Public Administration: The Struggle Continues. *Public Administration Review*, (59, 1), 83–88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/977482>

⁴⁰ Romero, C.L., Constantinides, E., & Brünink, L. (2014). Creation: Consumer Integration in Social Media Based Product and Service Development. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 383-396.

⁴¹ Hoyer, W. D., Chandu, R., Dorotic, M., Krafft, M., & Singh, S. S. (2010). Consumer Cocreation in New Product Development. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 283–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375604>

their needs and have a clear conception of products or services for which they are searching (Helms et al., 2012⁴²; Lee et al., 2012⁴³; O'Hern & Rindfleisch, 2001⁴⁴).

Local communities exist alongside larger social structures, and the attachment that people develop to their local communities is reflected largely in their interaction with local media, especially newspapers (Rosenberry, 2018)⁴⁵. Community newspapers create a sense of place for readers (Buchanan, 2009)⁴⁶ and foster social cohesion (Emke, 2001⁴⁷; Yamamoto, 2011)⁴⁸.

Listening to key stakeholders is important for developing the services that a community truly needs. The media has a major role to play as an empowering voice in the community. For example, Ewijk (2017, p. 15)⁴⁹ pointed out that magazines aim to publish articles, while journals aim to empower a profession or professional group through the organization of meetings, the pooling of experts from different perspectives, the organization of conferences, or the publication of books compiled from articles. In this paper, our methodology utilizes reflections from regional and national newspapers (including print and online versions), magazines, and telemedia.

The UNESCO Community Media Sustainability Policy Series (UNESCO, 2008)⁵⁰ emphasizes that community media satisfies the communication needs of their communities' members and enables them to exercise their rights of access to information and freedom of expression. Stamm (1985, p. 191)⁵¹ stated that "more than anything else, the shape of communities to come will be influenced by how effectively people can share their perceptions of what communities could become."

The media has an interesting duality in its contemporary structure. It is represented by daily newspapers, which circulate regionally or nationally, and television or radio broadcasts, which are nationwide. Additionally, there are journals, which are focused on certain groups of citizens. In the context of this paper and the CoSIE project, community is considered as the social interactions within a localized geographic space, such as Võrumaa in the context of Estonia. Community media, therefore, is represented by local outlets (mostly regional and national newspapers, television, radio stations, and journals) that reflect life in Võrumaa, the social interactions that take place, and the associated processes in their work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Background for the Study

This study was conducted as part of the European Union (EU) project, Co-creation of Social Service Innovation in Europe

⁴² Helms, R. W., Booij, E., & Spruit, M. R. (2012). *Reaching Out: Involving User in Innovation Tasks Through Social Media*. ECIS 2012, Barcelona, Spain.

⁴³ Lee, S. M., Olson, D. L., & Trimi, S. (2012). Co-innovation: Convergenomics, Collaboration, and Co-creation for Organizational Values. *Management Decision*, 50(5), 817–831.

⁴⁴ O'Hern, M. S., & Rindfleisch, A. (2001). Customer Co-creation: A Typology and Research agenda. *Review of Marketing Research* (pp. 84–106).

⁴⁵ Rosenberry, J. (2012). *Key Works: Some Connections Between Journalism and Community*. In Reader, B. & Hatcher, J. (Eds.) *The Foundations of Community Journalism: A Primer for Research*, 25–43. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁴⁶ Buchanan, C. (2009). Sense of Place in the Daily Newspaper. *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, Spring 2009, 62–82.

⁴⁷ Emke, I. (2001). *Community Newspapers and Community Identity*. Paper presented at Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association annual meeting, Québec City, QC, May 2001. Retrieved from: http://nre.concordia.ca/ftprootFull/reports/Emke_Editors_%20paper.pdf.

⁴⁸ Yamamoto, M. (2011). Community Newspaper Use Promotes Social Cohesion. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 32(1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073953291103200103>

⁴⁹ Ewijk, H. (2017). *The Essence of the Magazine Social Work*. Special issue of the 20th anniversary of social work. ISSN 1406- 8826, pp. 15-17.

⁵⁰ UNESCO. (2008). Defining Community Broadcasting. *UNESCO Community Media Sustainability Policy Series*. <https://en.unesco.org/community-media-sustainability/policy-series/defining>

⁵¹ Stamm, K. R. (1985). *Newspaper Use and Community Ties*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

(CoSIE), carried out in one region of the country—Võrumaa. The CoSIE project, as an international consortium, aims to introduce innovative ways of social service development. The Estonian pilot project utilized the development method of the start-up scene (a social hackathon), combining it with the strong social values of the welfare sector (CoSIE, 2019)⁵². The process of holding a social hackathon for creating innovative services with and for the citizens can be read about in a previous paper (Toros et al., 2020)⁵³.

Võrumaa is a rural area situated in southern Estonia with a total area of 2773 km², accounting for 6.1% of the area of the Republic of Estonia. Võrumaa had 35,415 inhabitants as of January 1, 2020, which comprises 2.7% of the total population of Estonia (Statistics Estonia, 2020)⁵⁴. The proportion of elderly people in Võrumaa (over 65 years of age) consists of 21.6% of the population (compared to 19.3% of the Estonian population). The proportion of disabled people is on average higher in Võrumaa than in Estonia, totaling 21.9% in 2017 (Statistics of Estonian Social Insurance Board, 2018)⁵⁵, while the proportion of disabled people in Estonia was 11.4% of the population in the same year (Kreitzberg, 2017)⁵⁶. This implies an increase in the need for services directed at vulnerable groups, such as elderly and disabled people.

According to the development strategy of Võrumaa 2019-2035+ (The Development Strategy of Võru County 2019-2035+, 2019)⁵⁷, problems in that county include the shrinking groups of kindergarten-age and school-age children, leading to a decreasing demand for places in educational institutions. The number of students continues to decline; hence, the challenge is to create opportunities for each student to acquire an appropriate and high-quality education. This may also necessitate reassessing the school network. Challenges are also related to the development of social and health services, including primary health services, which are more or less available in the county today. However, the challenge is to further develop these services and improve their quality, including the establishment of primary health centers to increase the availability and diversity of services. In order to ensure the well-being of people, Võrumaa aims to involve community resources in the creation and delivery of public services and to give greater freedom to communities.

During the CoSIE project, several development activities took place in Võrumaa, including hackathons, training sessions, information days, and roundtables, aimed at supporting innovation in community-based services by involving different social population target groups, including users and providers of services, leaders of village movements, volunteers, politicians, specialists from public authorities, local governments, entrepreneurs, and journalists. The main activities of the project were carried out over the years 2018–2020; during this period, the media coverage (as distribution and content) related to co-creation activities was followed and a database was established.

Data collection and sample

Media coverage was registered in the social media analysis database “Station.ee,” which is a media monitoring program created by the Baltic Media Monitoring Group (BMMG) that was specially designed to analyze the media coverage of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Station.ee’s comprehensive search system finds coverage based on keywords, phrases, authors, channels, groups of channels, or media type. Station.ee monitors over 400 media channels in real-time, including TV and radio, the entire Estonian media archive, social media, and state publications (notifications about public-sector information channels, including local government reports, official announcements, as well as public procurement and verbatim reports from the Riigikogu (Baltic Media..., 2019)⁵⁸.

⁵² CoSIE. (2019). ‘Co-Creation of Service Innovation in Europe’, Available online at: <https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/> (accessed 14 June 2019).

⁵³ Toros, K., Kangro, K., Reimann, K.L., Bugarszki, Z., Sindi, I., Saia, K. & Medar, M. (2020). Co-creation of social services on the example of social hackathon: The case of Estonia. *International Social Work*, pp. 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872820904130>

⁵⁴ Statistics Estonia. (2020). *Population*, Available online at: [Rahvastik/01Rahvastikunaitajad_ja_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis.asp](https://www.stat.ee/raha/01Rahvastikunaitajad_ja_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis.asp) (accessed 23 June 2020).

⁵⁵ Statistics of Estonian Social Insurance Board. (2018). *Data on Disabled Persons*. Tallinn: Estonian Social Insurance Board.

⁵⁶ Kreitzberg, M. (2017). *The Number of Disabled Persons, Developments and Proportion in the Population, 2010–2017*. Ministry of Social Affairs. Available online at: http://www.tai.ee/images/uudiskirja_Puuetega_inimeste_arv.pdf (accessed 3 February 2019).

⁵⁷ The Development Strategy of Võru County 2019-2035+. (2019). RT IV, 05.01.2019, 89. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/405012019089>

⁵⁸ *Baltic Media Monitoring Group (BMMG) database Station.ee (2019-2020)*. (2019). <https://bmmg.ee/>

As the main activities of the CoSIE project were carried out over two years, we used this period as the sample frame and included all online, TV, and radio channel categories in the media content search in the Sation.ee program for the study presented here. The database was established in three steps. Step 1 involved forming the preliminary sample, which was comprised of all media texts (articles, TV, and radio) containing the word “Võrumaa” and theme search terms that were chosen according to project focus/scope/aims including, for example, co-creation and engagement, which are shown in Table 1. In step 2, the duplicates (the same content published via different channels) were removed. Following Creswell (2014)⁵⁹, we then selected “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely” (p. 158) from the remaining material, which constituted the final sample used to answer research question 1. In step 3, using the above-mentioned principle of “information-rich cases,” we extracted a single text unit (paragraphs or sections) from primary sample media texts (articles, TV, and radio), which constituted the study’s primary sample used to answer research questions 2 and 3.

Table 1. Sample Profile and Size (number of news and extracted text units from them) by Search Words

Search algorithm: “Võrumaa” AND “...”	Preliminary sample of news/articles	Final sample of media texts (news/articles)	Primary sample (extracted text units from media texts)
“co-creation”	12	9	20
“engagement”	106	9	18
“hackathon”	6	4	10
“administrative reform”	55	3	7
“unemployment”	186	7	26
“reinforcement difficulties”	16	8	20
“problems”	1457	8	28
“development of services”	207	31	67
“service innovation”	9	3	3
“elderly and disabled people”	783	25	76
“dementia problems”	12	9	21
“workability reform”	4	4	4
In total	2853	120	300

Data analysis

We used a multi-stage media content analysis to answer the research questions. According to Frey (2018)⁶⁰, content analysis is an analytic method used in either quantitative or qualitative research for the systematic reduction and interpretation of text or video data. Thematic analysis is a descriptive strategy for data reduction (coding) and an analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorized, summarized, and reconstructed in a way that captures important concepts within the data set (Ayres 2008)⁶¹. Kurian (2011)⁶² demonstrated that this method involves reducing the data set to more manageable, categorical, or quantitative data for use in comparative analysis, commonly used in the study of politics, media, business, law, psychology, and public administration.

After forming the preliminary database with the support of the Station.ee search engine, the content of media texts was

⁵⁹ Creswell, J. (2014). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 3rd. Ed. SAGE.

⁶⁰ Frey, B. B. (2018). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation*. SAGE

⁶¹ Ayres, L. (2008). Thematic coding and analysis. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 868-868). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963909.n451

⁶² Kurian, G. T. (2011). Content analysis. In *The Encyclopedia of Political Science* (pp. 328-329). Washington, DC: CQ Press doi: 10.4135/9781608712434.n321

encoded by the investigator (human-coding). We used a mixed-method approach that entailed the following: to answer research questions 1 and 2, we used thematic coding and counting (a quantitative approach); to answer research question 3, we used open coding (a qualitative approach). Open coding refers to the initial interpretive process wherein raw research data are first systematically analyzed and categorized (Price, 2010)⁶³. The purpose of the open coding was to describe the context and meanings attributed to the co-creation and engagements. First, the group of researchers formulated keywords based on the queries made from the Station.ee database in the period January 1, 2018–December 31, 2019. The keywords are presented in Table 1. Off-topic media reflections were then removed from the query responses, and the selected media reflections were entered into the sample database. The reflections were then repeatedly read, and comments related to the research topic and questions were selected, coded, and counted by region (Table 2) and stakeholder group (Table 3).

FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis of the Station.ee database, 12 main themes (Table 1) emerged regarding the engagement of different target groups in the co-creation process and innovation of service development in Võrumaa. Each theme and sub-theme is described in the following sections.

Media Coverage as a Supporter of Co-Creation and Service Innovation

This theme focuses on the first and second research questions: Did the news about local collaborative events also reach nationwide media channels (RQ 1)? Which stakeholders and how many different people were given the floor in the media coverage (RQ 2)?

Regarding media coverage, our results indicated that cooperation with the press is active in Võrumaa. This is supported by the fact that the correspondent of Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) includes Võrumaa in its broadcasts on a daily basis, which brings to light important events in Võrumaa and issues that need attention. The topic of everyday life in Võrumaa, including the Loometalgud (Ideas Fair) event, is covered by the regional newspapers *Võrumaa Teataja* and *Võru Linna Leht* and by online publications, such as *lounaeeestipostimees.ee* and *lounaestlane.ee* (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of final sample's media texts coverage by regions and channels' types (n= 120)

Channels split by region	Nationwide news (n=6)	Nationwide special (n=11)	Local Võrumaa news (n=5)	Other places local news (n=4)	Total (n=26)
Number of media texts	20	29	33	38	120
Share from all media text	16%	24%	28%	32%	100%
Number of articles per channels	3,3	2,6	6,6	9,5	4,6

We identified 11 programs in the national media and electronic media (TV, radio) of other regions. There was no local TV/radio channel in Võrumaa. All local/regional media outlets were covered in the database, but it also included four investigative media channels in other regions and 17 nationwide media outlets. Comparing local and national channels, we found that news about local activities was well received by the national media (41% of articles). In the local media channels of other Estonian regions, 38 main sample articles (32%) reflected the experience of Võrumaa. Thus, the media has empowered topics and issues surrounding co-creation activities.

⁶³ Price, J. (2010). Coding: open coding. In A. J. MillsG. Durepos & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (pp. 156-157). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397.n55

The database contains 14 media outlets that posted coverage on the initiative of the project team members, of which three cases were articles in magazines, one case was a speech made via telemedia, six cases consisted of coverage in the national media, and four cases were coverage in the regional media.

Table 3 presents the type of stakeholders and the volume of people covered in the media. From this table, we can see that journalists, specialists in public institutions, and entrepreneurs had taken the floor. The analyzed media reports indicated that specialists and community activists were involved in co-creating, both in terms of speaking about problem areas and offering solutions.

Table 3. Media coverage by target groups

Stakeholders group's representative	Stakeholder group code used in quotes	Number of cases in the primary sample	Persons' in the final sample
Social specialist at county level	SS-C	22	5
Social specialist at local government level	SS-M	29	10
Education specialist at local government level	ES-M	8	4
Healthcare specialist	HCS	7	7
Specialist in a public institution	S-PI	50	25
Politician	PO	29	11
Community activist	CA	37	13
Journalist	JO	51	21
Service user	SU	9	9
Service provider	SP	10	2
Voluntary worker	V	3	3
Manager of national programme/organisation	M-NP	12	3
An entrepreneur	E	23	16
Statistics	S	2	2
Researcher	R	2	1
President of Estonia	EP	6	1
Total comments in media coverage		300	133

One of the specialists at the county level described the hackathon in the following way:

Thursday evening's creative event called "vunki mano!" was a hackathon weekend where everyone could come up with a life-changing idea that was turned into a viable project with mentors over three days. More than a hundred volunteers from all over Võrumaa closed themselves for a sunny weekend in Varstu schoolhouse in order to figure out working solutions for how to make life in Võrumaa better and smoother. (SS-C-18)

As discussed earlier, co-creating is a process through which representatives from various fields of cooperation are involved,

including the social, health, police, and education sectors, as well as entrepreneurs. Such cooperation has also been visible in the course of Võrumaa's Loometalgud, where local people, local authorities, government officials, community leaders, volunteers, service providers, users of services, entrepreneurs, and politicians meet. These have been events in which politicians from Võrumaa, members of the Estonian Parliament, and former and current members of the European Parliament have participated. These individuals all had the opportunity to contribute to the development of Võrumaa, to meet people to discuss their problems and their difficulties in coping with them, and to help find solutions. One outlet wrote:

Community-based services are viable if they are planned in cooperation with service consumers, the community and local authorities. This is the only way to create working solutions and improve the lives of all Võrumaa people regardless of age, income or health. (SS-C-10)

In connection with co-creation and inclusion in Võrumaa, during the two-year period of the CoSIE project, there was significant reflection about vulnerable target groups, including the elderly, people with special needs, the unemployed, families with difficulty coping, and other related problems. All of these topics have been actively covered by the citizens, specialists, and entrepreneurs, which have been aided by local, well-known politicians and journalists as the following quote reflects:

Estonian society is ageing and our population is characterized by a relatively low number of healthy life years. However, expectations for public services are not diminished. These circumstances have led to a clear need for the systematic development of voluntary activities in the social field. This is all the more so since volunteers can contribute primarily to activities for which social workers do not have time and which do not necessarily require appropriate education: good will and courageous initiative will suffice. (CA-24)

The Statistical Office, whose task is to provide Võrumaa with modern data, which is a necessary basis for all planning and preparation of action plans, and university researchers, who can contribute to evidence-based development and monitoring of new innovative service solutions by participating in cooperation, play a role in co-operation. For example, an analysis of the statistics about the number of people with disabilities in Võrumaa created a wide-ranging discussion about the work of family doctors and the fact that people are infrequently diagnosed with a disability. The study argued that family doctors are used to ensure the social guarantee of people rather than to provide targeted support for people with disabilities:

If you believe the statistics, the sickest people in Estonia live in Põlva, Jõgeva and Võru counties, because it is these counties that have the largest number of people with disabilities. Our statistics say that about half of the working-age population in South-East Estonia is reduced or lacking capacity for work, and a quarter of them are disabled. In South-East Estonia and Ida-Viru County, where people live in very narrow conditions and are dealing with entering false data into the system, this is seen as social assistance or support. Since the benefits are still intended for people with disabilities, this is a misuse of money that the Social Insurance Board can certainly not allow. (S-PI-27)

Co-creation and Engagement in Võrumaa

This theme focuses on the third and fourth research questions: How did the media share the content of the important topics and activities of the project (RQ 3)? What cooperation practices and experiences were shared in the media (RQ 4)?

When analyzing the content of media coverage, the keywords with content were differentiated from the texts which Võrumaa's development activities in recent years have been focused on and which were presented in the article, broken down by themes presented in Table 1.

Võrumaa promotes co-creation and community involvement in the development of services for innovative residents in an event called the Loometalgud (Idea Fair). The main goal of this event is to develop services that meet people's needs by co-creating different target groups in the community. The culture of fairs in Estonia has been established historically, and under this keyword, people have repeatedly gathered to create and develop something new. Fair culture is part of the story of Estonians and deserves to be preserved and revered more strongly, as the following quote by community activists argues:

For my part, I picked up the recordings of the work that took place in Võrumaa on Facebook and collected them for a joint “Teeme ära” (let’s do it) on the Võrumaa page. I looked at this footage, and on the faces of the makers seemed to be joy, contentment, and patriotism in the best sense. (CA-12).

Analysis of media reports reveals that the media is used as a tool to promote change in the society of Võrumaa and to further develop ideas that support people’s well-being and coping abilities; the media, therefore, assists in carrying out necessary reforms and developing essential services for the population. Recently, Estonia has carried out two major all-Estonian reforms, the administrative reform (2017) and the work capacity reform (2016), both of which affected cooperation and dealt with ensuring the availability of services for the local population of Võrumaa. Several media outlets have highlighted these topics, generating both positive and negative coverage.

Media coverage highlighted a positive connection between the work capacity reform and the increase in society’s awareness of the needs of people with disabilities and the greater interest of employers in creating jobs for people with disabilities. However, negative coverage pointed to the confusion associated with the transition of the reform. Nonetheless, people overall are satisfied with the change in the position of people with disabilities in society, as suggested by the following quotes:

The awareness of people with special needs and their needs is improving throughout society. In the past, the focus was on the person’s incapacity for work, but now the focus is on the person’s ability to work, that is, what the individual is capable of doing. (SS-C-49)

There are certainly many pitfalls and bottlenecks as work capacity reform begins, but every day work is done to solve problems and find work for everyone who wants to work. (SS-C-49)

In the course of the administrative reform, the former smaller 13 local governments in Võrumaa were merged into five major local governments, as mentioned in the introduction. The administrative reform was considered as a positive opportunity to specialize in a larger local government and thus provide more professional services and a greater possibility of combining different service packages based on the needs of the population groups:

The advantages of the administrative reform are undoubtedly the specialized social workers, which the merger of local governments created an opportunity for. Children’s care and child protection will probably benefit most from this, but the working area of the elderly and disabled will also gain strength. The “package of social benefits” has become somewhat more compact; earlier differences in emphasis on whether predominantly universal benefits or the combination of universal and need-based benefits have disappeared. (SS-M-4)

As negative problems were related to the administrative reform, immediate changes in the boundaries of local governments and the related need to address community identity issues were highlighted in media reports. Those municipalities whose border negotiations did not reach an agreement and were forcibly merged did not agree with the results of the administrative reform:

Forced amalgamation that ignores socio-demographic realities, i.e. the boundaries of the centres of attraction, and parish names containing northern, western, etc. alliances, do not in any way support the formation of a common community identity. This result is certainly the most visible at this point in time for administrative-territorial reform and forces social workers to make efforts to give the concept the content of community work. (SS-M-5)

In the last two years, Võrumaa faced two major crises. The first was a large-scale electrical outage caused by storm damage in the town of Võru and neighboring municipalities. The second concerned the closure of a small school, which caused critical opposition and sharp discussion among the local population. During these experiences, Võrumaa successfully practiced co-creation in solving problems that arose due to the crises. The weekend storm wiped out electricity and affected the whole town of Võru and several companies. Roofs flew off, power lines were on fire, and trees were uprooted. The crisis resulted in the death of one person. During the first few days of the week, the brigades were still working with reinforcements, but they

found it difficult to move to the fault points. The roads were filled with broken trees; and in rural areas, the soil was soft from rain for several days, leading to an increased risk of vehicles stalling. As one of the participants indicated, “*The storm was a real crisis exercise*” (JO-39).

The second crisis in Võrumaa involved the closure of a small rural school—leading to the reduction of the availability of educational services based on the financial capacity of the local government, which the public questioned. One respondent wrote, “*Educational diversity is important and it should not depend on the minds of local authorities, but on what every family considers to be the best for their children*” (JO-17). In both of these crises, the media reflections show that people of Võrumaa managed their crises well, and today they are treated as lessons.

Hackathons have played an important role in Võrumaa, which has been demonstrated in media coverage. Hackathon participants have included citizens and organizations who volunteer for charity and carry out various service development work. For example, they have included “*Saagu Parem*” (Let’s Be Better; a charity organization), “*Kodukant*” (NGOs of the Estonian Village Movement), Southern Estonia Special Care Centre (welfare services for people with special mental needs), and opinion leaders and citizens who are service users.

In order for all of us to live in Estonia, it is important to notice and help each other. Community support is invaluable, not only on a project basis, but on a daily basis: help the neighbor’s mother-in-law bring home a grocery bag, help the social worker and the needy reach each other, or just talk. Cooperation between different parties – the state, local government and community – is of key importance. (PO-5)

The growth of activity for co-creation is a good basis for the implementation of several national programs and activities in Võrumaa. For example, more than ten people with special needs participated in the third hackathon. They jointly developed the idea of the “*gold key fund*” so that a personal assistant service could be developed and all people with special needs who need the service could use the fund’s support.

There are a number of people with special needs who, by using personal helper services, could be useful to society, not wait for extinction in a nursing home. What is the price of a person, including a person with special needs? (SU-9)

The Idea Fair also gained momentum in its activities with the non-profit organization Living with Dementia, which brings together and supports caregivers of people with dementia through a support group, thereby improving the quality of life of people with dementia and their family members. This support group has advised caregivers and has carried out several training sessions:

The task of the Competence Centre is to provide counselling services to people with dementia and their relatives, incl. providing information about dementia, diagnosis, existing health and care services and other opportunities for receiving assistance (support groups, experience counselling, psychological assistance) and providing telephone and web-based counselling (including guidance on how to reach assistance), as well as improving the competence of specialists working with the target group, including developing or developing training programs, materials, information and guidance materials, teaching materials necessary for the work of specialists. (S-PI-47)

Hackathons proved their effectiveness, as for each hackathon, there were two to three teams whose activities continued after the hackathon. Such activities were also covered in the media. For example, on the subject of volunteering, Võrumaa was repeatedly mentioned, and there are several references to voluntary activities every month.

Two teams, “*A Model of Volunteers*” and “*Saagu Parem*,” took part in hackathons I and II, and their activities were reported in the media. For example, volunteers help care for the elderly and people with special needs. They also contribute voluntarily to community activities by participating in the cleanup campaign and helping those in need during Christmas, as the following quotes outline:

The theme was the development of a model for involving volunteers suitable for the conditions of Võrumaa. This time, the brainstorming exercise established a real plan for who is doing what and in what order. The aim is to introduce the principles and possibilities of volunteering to the people of Võrumaa. (CA-10)

The long-term goal of the centre's mind-winning campaign was to keep the living alive and, together with other organizations, dream of a million hours of volunteer work in Võrumaa. (CA-17)

Estonia is a small country and therefore, in some respects, a privileged state. Within the framework of the CoSIE project, a meeting with the president took place in Võrumaa during which the development perspectives of Võrumaa were discussed and the future was considered. This has given Võrumaa a strong impetus to utilize co-creation and has encouraged ordinary citizens, specialists, and politicians to contribute more effectively to cooperation and the development of innovative service solutions.

Social innovation is seen as one of the solutions to deepening complex and multi-party problems. The Civil Society Development Plan for 2015-2020 states that "social innovation" means creative solutions that create new value, which has long-term effects that increase people's well-being and have a clear economic output. Social innovation is new ideas, products, services and models that meet societal needs and do so more effectively than previous solutions and create new social relations and cooperation and business opportunities. (EP-3)

The analysis shows that entrepreneurs are particularly engaged when it is necessary to solve problem situations in cooperation with specialists, community leaders, and ordinary citizens. Entrepreneurs and community organizations also contribute to various campaigns that support Võrumaa in terms of the living environment and sustainability:

In April, the Estonian Chamber of People with Disabilities and the Foundation of the Law Services Bureau completed their first year of operation, where free legal aid has been distributed to people with special needs across Estonia. Thanks to the funding of the Ministry of Justice, we can provide a service designed for the purpose of solving the legal problems of people with medium, severe and deep disabilities. (E-17)

At the community level, media reports show that the development of services involves co-operation between local governments, entrepreneurs, and local services of state agencies, including the Rescue Board and the police, to ensure the stable functioning of Võrumaa, for example, several clean-up exercises, a multi-day powerhouse due to storm winds, and the safety of older people and those with special needs through the carrying out of a fire prevention campaign. The same can be said of specialists of state institutions who work as state representatives in the region and contribute to forming the task of ensuring the availability of services for the population. In such cases, local government specialists, regional organizations, community activists, and service users are involved alongside regional journalism:

We have long understood that teamwork is the only way forward and therefore we can listen to and value the good advice of our colleagues. (SS-M-1)

In September, the Health Insurance Fund, the Health Board, the Unemployment Insurance Fund, the Association of Physicians, the Police and Border Guard Board and the Public Prosecutor's Office sat down in September to work out a cooperation plan. (S-PI-41)

The media coverage indicates that many journalists in Võrumaa care about the development of Võrumaa and contribute to covering different topics for this purpose. The regional publications *Võrumaa Teataja* and *Võru Linna Leht* have most widely reflected the development of services. However, the people of Võrumaa have also been active nationally in representing their region. Media coverage has been created with the involvement and participation of different community target groups involved in co-creating processes, which has helped to create the identity of Võrumaa as a community.

DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that through media coverage, people in Võrumaa describe community development as a process, such as in Frank & Smith (1999)⁶⁴, Shaw (2008)⁶⁵, and Phillips and Pittman (2009)⁶⁶, where co-creation and the involvement of the population are central and the community contributes both to reflecting societal changes and population problems and to service development. History shows that the community's well-being is created collectively in Võrumaa and increased through economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Community development as a concept brings together different fields and groups of communities, including politicians, state and local government specialists, community leaders, and entrepreneurs from different backgrounds. Together, they are able to implement national reforms, collectively cope with crises, and solve problems affecting Võrumaa, for example, supporting those in need with volunteer work or solving environmental issues under the leadership of village movements.

The analysis of media coverage suggested several national and regional media publications focus on Võrumaa's population. These media outlets have reflected the problems of vulnerable situation groups and the development of services aimed at those groups over the past two years. The focus of the media when addressing these topics has varied in connection with different events, for example, crises that have occurred in Võrumaa (e.g., several days of power cuts caused by a storm); the administrative reform (joining of municipalities and redistribution of county-level tasks); and the work capacity reform (assessment of the capacity of people with special needs for work and labor-market services for people with reduced working capacity). The media has also focused on problems in the narrower social spheres, for example, the lack of family doctors and the need to reform the family doctor system to ensure the availability of primary health care services for the population and the absence of a rural municipality's educational system in which a small rural school was closed. All of the above topics have been covered by various media, including television media, national and regional newspapers, magazines, and online media channels.

Several authors, including Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom (2014)⁶⁷, Bradshaw (2007)⁶⁸, Ledwith (2011)⁶⁹, and Nickels and Rivera (2018)⁷⁰, argued that community development policy and practice are partly influenced by how policymakers define problems that community development initiatives seek to solve. Võrumaa media coverage defines Võrumaa's main problems as issues in coping with certain target groups of the population, including those with special needs and unemployed and elderly people whose coping is disturbed due to special needs, unemployment risks, or age, respectively. At the same time, the above problems inspired the communities in Võrumaa to act together. The opinions of the people in the media have directed the Võrumaa regional policy to seek innovative service solutions and to develop community development initiatives. The media coverage has targeted specific strategies to ensure the well-being of the population, including job creation, housing creation, and improvement of the living environment.

⁶⁴ Frank, F. & Smith, A. (1999). *The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity*. Ottawa, ON: Human

⁶⁵ Shaw, M. (2008). Community development and the politics of community. *Community Development Journal*, 43(1), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107170701488888>

⁶⁶ Phillips, R. & Pittman, R. H. (2009). *An Introduction to Community Development*. London, UK: Routledge.

⁶⁷ Dreier, P., Mollenkopf, J., & Swanstrom, T. (2014). *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty- First Century*, 3rd edition. Lawrence, KS:

⁶⁸ Bradshaw, T. K. (2007). Theories of poverty and antipoverty programs in community development. *Journal of Community Development*

⁶⁹ Ledwith, M. (2011). *Community Development: A Critical Approach*. Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.

⁷⁰ Nickels, A. E., & Rivera, J. D. (2018). *Community development and Public Administration Theory: Promoting Democratic Principles to*

Osborne et al. (2013)⁷¹, Osborn and Strokosch (2013)⁷², and Kasymova and Gaynor (2014)⁷³ saw citizens and users as an integral part of the provisioning of public services, which aligns with the findings of this study. In Võrumaa, active citizens are an integral part of the development of public value and lead community development initiatives. Reflecting all reforms, crises, and problem areas, the public is active and accounted for in both community development and decision-making processes. Media reflections show the involvement of citizens in co-creating processes in community development, which seeks to make community work more effective.

Nickels and Rivera (2018)⁷⁴, Osborne and Stokosch (2013)⁷⁵, Mulgan (2006)⁷⁶, and von Hippel (2005)⁷⁷ pointed out that simply involving citizens in community development planning is insufficient. Only effective co-operation can achieve transformative and necessary innovations in public services. The hackathons carried out in the CoSIE project created an opportunity for public innovation and specifically defined citizens' role as a driving force for change—combining their experiences with the realities of service needs and the possibilities for delivering them both in planning and designing existing designs. Media coverage about the activities of the hackathon teams not only highlighted the contribution to the provision of services or the potential improvement of community organization but also shaped community values and supported co-creation in the community through the media. Various innovative ideas were generated during the hackathons, but further developing these ideas requires more work, including training, networking, implementing action plans, and cooperating with the media.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996)⁷⁸ and Speller and Twigger-Ross (2009)⁷⁹ highlighted “the place” in their work as an important part of identity, which in turn plays a role in shaping the community's identity. Gustafson (2001)⁸⁰, Friedland and McLeod (1999)⁸¹, and Stamm (1985)⁸² specified that places have meaning through the relationships and the interactions of the people living there and the sense of community generated by such social relationships. Media coverage of the co-creation also highlights the special value of the community. The emergence of keywords—Ideas Fair, hackathon, and Vunki mano (push back) in this process—are important examples of this. The results of the analysis indicate that the media of Võrumaa has the biggest role in promoting the co-creation in communities, as Rosenberry (2018)⁸³ emphasized, because symbolic media-based communication supports community creation in co-creation processes and should thus not be overlooked.

⁷¹ Osborne, S. P. & Strokosch, K. (2013). It Take Two to Tango? Understanding the Co- production of Public Services by Integrating the Devices Management and Public Administration Perspectives. *British Journal of Management*, 24(S1), S31–S47.

⁷² Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Nasi, G. (2013). A New Theory for Public Service Management? Toward a (Public) Service- Dominant Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 43(2), 135–158.

⁷³ Kasymova, J., & Gaynor, T. S. (2014). Effective Citizen Participation in Environmental Issues: What Can Local Governments Learn? *State & Local Government Review*, 46(2), 138–145.

Estonian Institute of Economic Research. (2019). Konjunktuur 1 (208). Tallinn. <https://docplayer.ee/151506127-Konjunktuur-nr-1-208-2019-m%C3%A4rts.html>

⁷⁴ Nickels, A. E., & Rivera, J. D. (2018). *Community development and Public Administration Theory: Promoting Democratic Principles to Improve Communities*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-30473-4.

⁷⁵ Osborne, S. P. & Strokosch, K. (2013). It Take Two to Tango? Understanding the Co- production of Public Services by Integrating the Devices Management and Public Administration Perspectives. *British Journal of Management*, 24(S1), S31–S47.

⁷⁶ Mulgan, G. P. (2006). The Process of Social Innovation. *Innovations*, 1(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1162/itgg.2006.1.2.145>

⁷⁷ von Hippel, E. (2005). *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁷⁸ Twigger-Ross, C.L. & Uzzell, D.L. (1996). Place and Identity Processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16(3), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.1996.0017>

⁷⁹ Speller, G.M. & Twigger-Ross, C.L. (2009). Cultural and social disconnection in the context of a changed physical environment.

⁸⁰ Gustafson, P. (2001). Meanings of place: Everyday experience and theoretical conceptualizations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2000.0185>

⁸¹ Friedland, L. & McLeod, J. (1999). *Community Integration and Mass Media: A Reconsideration*. In Demers, D. & Viswanath, K. (Eds.) *Mass Media, Social Control and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

⁸² Stamm, K. R. (1985). *Newspaper Use and Community Ties*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

⁸³ Rosenberry, J. (2018). *Community Media and Identity in Ireland*. Routledge, ISBN: 978- 1- 138- 30434- 5 (hbk), pp. 4 -15.

Fledderus (2016)⁸⁴, Steen and Tuurnas (2018)⁸⁵, Boyle and Harris (2009)⁸⁶ underlined the role of specialists in co-creating processes, as co-creation is based on relationships between professional employees and service users. In this process, public service professionals are regarded as coordinators. Media reflections on co-creation and inclusion processes in Võrumaa show the participation of specialists and county-level developers. For example, media reports have raised issues related to the development of services and topics where people are given information about (1) new service solutions that they can use (e.g., free bus trips on county lines, needs and opportunities for organizing social transport, restarting train traffic in Võrumaa) and (2) opportunities for volunteers to be involved in the provision of welfare services and work with children and young people. The media analysis showed an orientation toward events where topics are raised, and they remain topical until the situation is resolved. The focus then shifts to following topics that concern the people of Võrumaa.

Romero et al. (2014)⁸⁷, Helms et al. (2012)⁸⁸, and Lee et al. (2012)⁸⁹ underlined that the customer plays a central role in the process of creating new value. They indicated that co-creation takes place voluntarily and is based on offerings and ideas and time spent by customers. Media coverage showed that the ideas raised during the hackathon sessions allowed citizens to find solutions to their problems through the media and to involve the team in planning the necessary service solutions. The feedback from the teams on placing the customer as a central service provider at the center of service development was positive and enabled the creation of necessary service developments.

Rosenberry (2018)⁹⁰, Hess and Waller (2013)⁹¹, and Stamm (1985)⁹² discussed that community media has a central role in shaping geographical symbolism in the areas served, in addition to influencing community identity. For example, the meanings “Võrumaa” (place, where to live) and “Võrumaalane” (citizen of Võrumaa) can be symbolically constructed in the sense that symbolic representation helps to understand what living in Võru means to a person, how community relations are developed there, and how co-creation contributes to community development.

Rosenberry (2012)⁹³, Buchanan (2009)⁹⁴, and Yamamoto (2011)⁹⁵ asserted that news organizations are an integral part of the community structure because they reflect decisions related to community stakeholders, promote social cohesion, and seek to maintain local consensus. They argued that the media coverage of local communities develops community awareness and provides news of people’s activities and achievements. The tonality of Võrumaa media coverage of co-creation has been rather positive. Positive media reflections distinguished (1) the efforts to cope with the crisis caused by the storm; (2) the Rescue Board’s campaign to make life safer for older people and people with special needs by providing fire safety advice and installing sensors; (3) the availability of free transport on the routes within the county; and (4) the ideas fair that was esteemed

⁸⁴ Fledderus, J. (2016). *User Co-Production of Public Service Delivery: Effects on Trust*. Dissertation. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.

⁸⁵ Steen, T. & Tournas, S. (2018). The Roles of the professional in Co-Production and Co-creation processes. In T. Brandsen, T. Steen, B. Verschuere (Eds). *Co-Production and Co-Creation Engaging Citizens in Public Services*. Taylor and Francis Group.

⁸⁶ Boyle, D. and Harris, M. (2009). *The Challenge of Co-Production: How Equal Partnerships Between Professionals and the Public are Crucial to Improving Public Services*. Discussion paper. London: NESTA.

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by participants. Negative media reflections covered the closure of the school and problems created by the work capacity and administrative reforms, which generated confusion, a need for clarification, and a search for solutions.

Many journalists in Võrumaa contribute to the development of the region by posting various media reports and developing discussions of both positive and negative aspects of particular topics.

Finally, research into media coverage can help create a framework for co-creating and involving two important dimensions: (a) the meaning and application of the concepts of co-creation and inclusion will change over time as the underlying circumstances change (e.g., following changes in people's opinions after participation in hackathons and training) and (b) all thoughts, activities, and media coverage have a special articulation of Võrumaa, which is important for the development of the identity of Võrumaa as a regional community. The study of these dimensions is a longer-term process that did not fit within the scope of this project. However, these issues should be addressed in the future.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The main limitation of this study was the narrow focus of keywords, focusing primarily on community co-creation and involvement in the development of services in Võrumaa. The analysis was also limited by the use of only public media coverage and the exclusion of news from social media channels and rural municipality government websites. Despite these limitations, this study generated important takeaways.

The concept of participatory society is an emerging idea in a number of European countries as an alternative to traditional welfare states (Delsen, 2016)⁹⁶. In Estonia, the concept is also connected to political efforts striving to discard the post-Soviet mentality of learned dependency and encourage active citizenship in the development of society. In the future social care system, this active citizenship can play an important role, especially in small, rural communities where the state does not have enough resources and capacity to provide people with proper infrastructure and services. In these cases, local communities, enterprises, and municipalities must find their own solutions.

The current approach of the Estonian government not only aims to involve different stakeholders in service provision, but also seeks innovative solutions and new types of service design to meet service needs and revitalize local communities. Considering the given values and mainstream liberal economic ideologies in Estonia, there is little chance the country will multiply its social expenditures, thus introducing a Northern European-style welfare model. Instead, the country is trying to find innovative solutions, mobilizing community resources and utilizing modern technology to renew the landscape of the social care system. Within this transformative process, private partners and the civil society are invited to participate.

The positive media coverage we explored in our analysis can be considered encouraging feedback regarding the first reaction of the media in strengthening communities and welfare development in Estonia. This study demonstrates that shifting development resources to more innovative co-creative solutions is welcomed in Estonia.

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