CoAct
Citizen Social Science

Co-evaluation in Citizen (Social) Science

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The CoAct project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No. 873048

Co-evaluation

is a form of participatory evaluation that initiates the conversation on expectations, objectives and impact already at the start of the project, either when the research design is co-created with different stakeholders, or at least, when the participation of actors is negotiated. The main difference between co-evaluation and conventional types of research evaluation is that participants are also involved in the decision on project goals and evaluation instruments.

... for an evaluation that matters!

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Co-evaluation

The goal is to research with (not on) participants by involving them as co-researchers, positioning them as authorities of their own experiences and further developing their awareness of systemic issues to move them to social action (Participatory Action Research)

Inspired by participatory research concept of “co-researchers” and understanding of knowledge as “co-production”.

Co-production is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we chose to live in. (Sheila Jasanoff)

https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory_evaluation

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Co-evaluation

Participant ownership	Evaluation is oriented to the needs of the participants in an inclusive and balanced way. Participants take certain actions and responsibilities for project outcomes and their assessment.
Openness and reflexivity	Participants meet to communicate and negotiate to reach a consensus on evaluation results, solve problems, and make plans for the improvement of the project, evaluation approaches, and impact measures; input should be balanced and representation should be guaranteed for all involved stakeholders
Transformation	Emphasis is on identification of lessons learned, improvement of benefits and wellbeing, for all participants.
Flexibility	Co-evaluation design is flexible and determined (to the extent possible) during the group processes. The mix of formats and methods used should reflect the project aims and potentially empower marginalised perspectives.
Documentation and transparency	Whenever possible and ethically desirable, evaluation procedures should be documented and made accessible to participants, or even the wider public.
Timing	Co-evaluation has to start as early as possible, but latest during the negotiation of research questions and design of methodology.

Main characteristics of co-evaluation, adapted from (Patton, 2008)

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Co-evaluation in CoAct

… addressing social global concerns related to mental health care, youth employment, environmental justice and gender equality by engaging citizens as co-researchers.

… understanding Citizen Social Science as participatory research methodology co-designed and directly driven by citizen groups sharing a social concern.

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Co-defining KPIs

	Process & Feasibility	Outcome & Impact
Scientific dimension	* Scientific investigations * Data & systems * Evaluation & adaption * Cooperation & synergies	* Scientific knowledge & publications * New research fields & structures * New knowledge resources
Citizen scientist dimension	* Target group alignment * Degree of involvement * Facilitation & communication * Communication & synergies	* Knowledge & attitudes * Behavior & ownership * Motivation & engagement
Socio-ecological & economic dimension	* Target group alignment * Active involvement * Collaboration & synergies	* Social impact * Ecological impact * Wider innovation potential

- New scientific methods
- New leading questions for further research
- New collaboration amongst societal actors

- Personal impact, literacy, recognition
- Expected change at individual level
- New knowledge, skills and competencies

- Societal goals, social change, social capital
- Resilience, political participation
- Responsibility for natural environment

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Co-evaluation instruments
… across cases

indicator matrix
co-evaluation roadmap
cross-case learnings

	Co-Researchers & Citizen Scientists	CoAct Professional Researchers	Knowledge Coalition
Output			
Inter-mediate outcome			
Long-term outcome			

CoAct cases indicator matrix

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Co-evaluation instruments
… case specific

co-evaluation tool box

	Direct data	Indirect data
Qualitative data	Interviews, focus groups Cultural probes Experience sampling Mappings, network maps Workshop evaluation	Content analysis of messages shared in our digital platforms
Quantitative data	Experience sampling Questionnaire Workshop evaluation	Access statistics to our digital platforms

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Co-evaluation during Covid-19

… from physical interventions ……to digital…

effects on

- research topic itself/shift in social concerns
- research process
- co-research input
- co-research output

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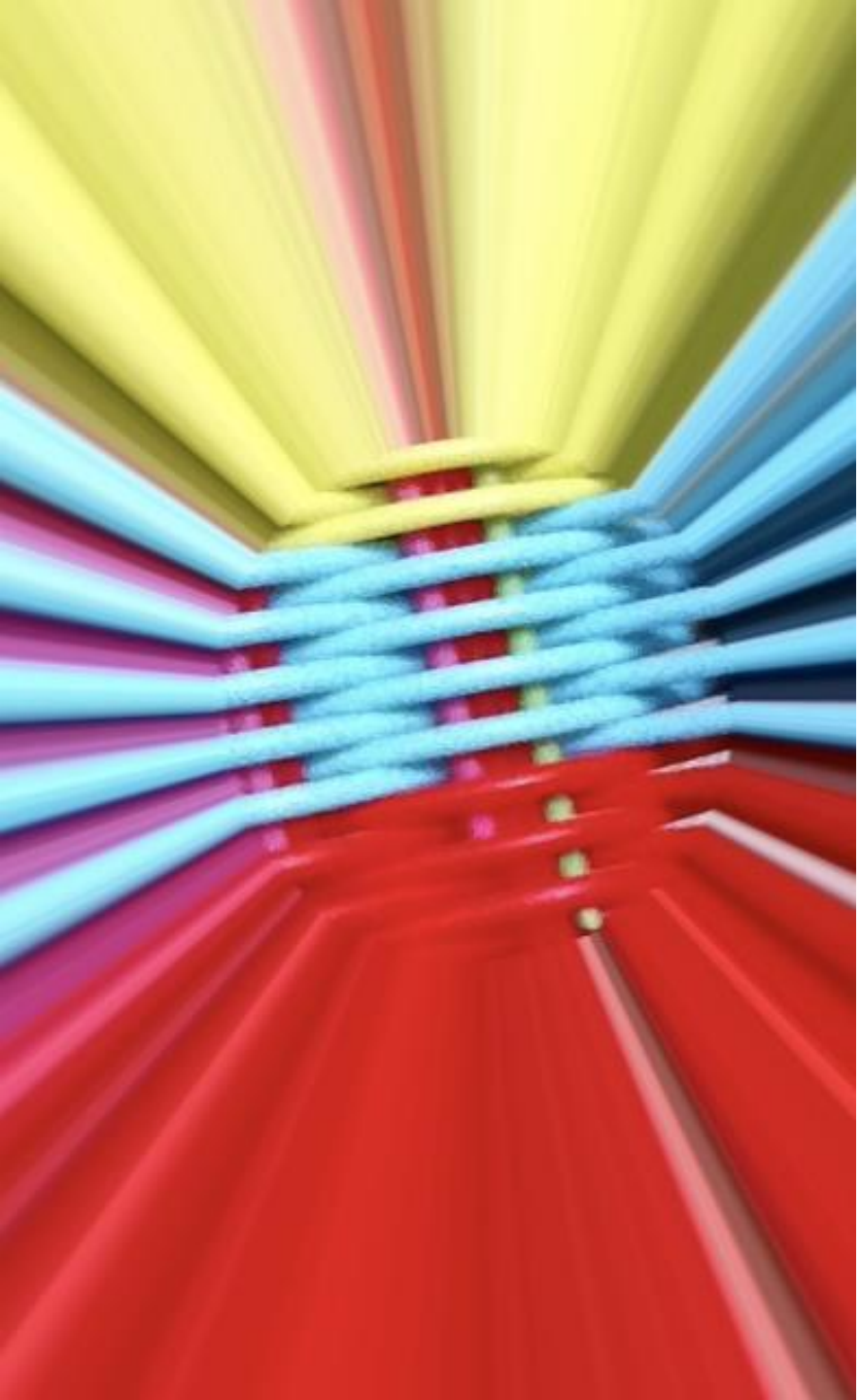

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Open questions and limits

- Data privacy regulations restrict data-exchange between researchers and the co-evaluation team
- Language issues when working with citizens across regions
- Misconception of “evaluation” as “being evaluated” instead of “evaluating” the project
- Project dynamics: uncertainty - flexibility in the research process while maintaining research integrity
- Overload of tasks and responsibilities of participants /and researchers)

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"

Do you have experience in co-designing the evaluation strategy with different stakeholders?

Have you done so already at the beginning of a project? What were the benefits and the challenges for you?

Do you have experience with alternative methods (e.g. open evaluation, peer-interviews, diaries, storytelling, etc.)

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Thanks for your attention.

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