



Western  
UNIVERSITY • CANADA

**Assessing the costs and  
benefits of engagement  
processes and outcomes  
(OR  
To co-produce or not to co-  
produce research)**

**AGCI**

**October 2, 2023**

**Western** 

# What has influenced this presentation?

Oliver, K., Kothari, A. & Mays, N. The dark side of coproduction: do the costs outweigh the benefits for health research?. *Health Res Policy Sys* 17, 33 (2019).

Rycroft-Malone, J., Graham, I., Kothari, A., McCutcheon, C. Evolving to the Fourth Generation of Knowledge Production and Implementation: Democratisation Through Research Coproduction (under review)

Current projects, graduate students

### Practical costs

- Large administrative burden arranging meetings, rooms, travel
- Expensive in terms of researcher time and resources

### Personal costs to researchers

- Increased interpersonal conflict
- Burnout and stress

### Professional costs to researchers

- Independence and credibility questioned
- Reputational damage

### Costs to research

- Managing relationships takes time, effort
- Investing in relationships with no guarantee of outcome

### Costs to stakeholders

- Sacrificing time from day job (if not officially sanctioned)

### Costs to the research profession

- Career costs
- Reduced motivation for stakeholder to engage or use research
- Credibility and utility of evidence questioned
- Research evidence become just another voice

# To co-produce or not?

Less emphasis on coproduction when ...

The policy or programme is likely to be **controversial** or the findings are likely to be contested

**Conflicts of interest** between stakeholders are likely to be hard to manage (e.g. policy-makers are directly responsible for the successful delivery of a policy or programme)

There is **less concern to use the findings directly** and immediately for policy or management decisions

Funders and/or commissioners of the research **value 'expert', dispassionate scientific inquiry** above other forms of knowledge

The nature and purpose of the policy or programme is relatively **well defined** and agreed upon

The prime purpose of the research is to establish whether the policy or programme 'works' and there is **strong prior commitment** by policy-makers or managers to acting on the findings (i.e. 'decision space' is available)

Undertaking the research is **less dependent on cooperation** of policy agencies or local programme implementers

There are **good, informal, ongoing relationships** between the researchers, and policy-makers and service managers

One or more of time, **resources** and expertise are in **limited supply** to involve the key stakeholders at all appropriate points in the research process

# A new view – 4<sup>th</sup> generation

*“Extending Best and Holmes’ three generations of thinking about knowledge to action, we frame the fourth generation of thinking as ‘democratisation’ – in which knowledge and action is inextricably linked through research coproduction. It is a principle-based approach driven by a set of values that extends the idea of research collaboration and engagement to one of democratising research coproduction.”*

# An Emerging View

Instead of thinking about engagement or co-production in the generation of knowledge,  
think about **engagement or co-production in how research is used.**

**Engagement in implementation!**

**Engagement in sustainability of impacts!**



Western  
UNIVERSITY • CANADA