



Freedom Within a Framework

Written by Farrell Renowden, October 2022

'Freedom within a Framework' was first described to me by the brilliant Matt Peacock ([Arts and Homelessness International](#)) when he generously gave up his time to discuss all things co-creation earlier this year. I've been on a journey (I think we've all been on a journey!) exploring how we genuinely empower communities and partners, and this concept has stuck with me.

'Co-creation' is a buzz word that has been around for a while, yet it still appears to mean different things depending on who you talk to: funders seem to love the concept, but dislike the time and money it takes, academics often refer to [Arnstein's Ladder of Participation](#) with delight and trepidation, and many of the creative older people I work with have their own opinions about how much 'power' they want and when. The word 'co-creation' (see also 'co-design' and 'co-production') has a lot of power itself and can often result in misunderstanding and imposter syndrome all round.

The reason I've spent so long agonising over the theory and practice of co-creation is the new project we are focussed on as a team: [Creative Later Life 2025](#). The over-arching premise of the project is that 'older people lead the creative ageing movement' but how to achieve this is a challenge. 'Co-creation' is a significant part of the answer, but achieving this, authentically, at scale, is hugely complex. The idea of 'Freedom within a Framework' is a revelation and it's a model I am exploring across both the new Age of Creativity Network website and new Age Friendly Creativity National Network we are launching this month.

Defining the 'framework' and the 'freedom' has taken time, but we are now at the beginning of a hugely creative process, which we will share as we go along. The new Age of Creativity Network website has an area dedicated to '[Older People](#)', including 'Lived Experience', 'Participation', 'Anti-Ageism' and 'Role Models'- all 'COMING SOON'; not a late edition, but purposefully incomplete- and just the start of our focus on co-creation online.

I'm still on a journey (we are all still on the journey!) to power sharing more effectively with individuals who experience marginalisation across the creative and age sectors, but progress is being made. If you have any theory or practice that relates to co-creation, then please do share it on the new [website](#) for us all to learn from. Or let us know what your latest 'buzz word' is, keeping you up at night by sharing your own [editorial blog](#) like this one for the network.

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