

Book Review

Victor Pestoff, Taco Brandsen, Bram Verschuere (eds):
New Public Governance

The Third Sector, and Co-Production, Routledge, Abingdon,
2012, pp. xvii, 396, index £85.00 (hardback)

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Co-production is a describing concept for a wide set of social relations and ideas— new and old. This is the first conclusion one gets going through the book edited by V. Pestoff, T. Brandsen, and B. Verschuere. It is difficult to provide a sufficiently abstract but operational concept describing the variety of practices and traditions, from the Ostroms studies on co-production in the 1970s to the consequences of the following New Public Management, the subsequent alternative formulation of New Public Governance (NPG) or even the social innovations of democratic deliberation and citizens' control. The book aims at contributing to a “comprehensive theoretical and systematic empirically orientated understanding of what happens when citizens and/or the third sector are drawn into public service provision and the various aspects of co-production” (pp. 1–2). The thread is the relations between citizens or third sector organizations and public services or government. Framed under NPG, the book is concerned with public policy and services and the implications of co-production. It has a cross-sectoral and cross-national comparative concern within a diversity of theoretical frameworks and empirical cases.

The editors gather a range of contributions distributed in the four parts and 20 chapters of the book. Since there is no single theoretical basis—although one perceives the influence of the editors' previous work and of former dialogs between the authors—Part I, as well as the foreword written by Elionor Ostrom, provides a conceptual background with distinctive meanings emerging from the different scholarly traditions and contexts. Concepts such as co-governance, co-management, and co-construction are positioned side-by-side with co-production, and their meanings are contextualized in specific types of service relations. In the first chapter of Part I, V. Pestoff reviews the uses of co-production in a sort of theoretical

introductory chapter. But the following chapters also bring significant theoretical contributions. T. Bovaird and E. Löffler disaggregate service management activities to identify forms of co-production, providing examples in the UK. B. Ewert and A. Evers analyze co-production at micro- and meso-levels, in the relation between professionals and individuals and between user organizations and the healthcare system in Germany. Y. Vaillancourt mobilizes an international framework and the concept of co-construction to emphasize the participatory features in the relation between the social and solidarity economy and public policy while presenting cases of public policies' co-construction in Canada and Quebec. J. M. Ackerman focuses on the concepts of good government and accountability and, with examples from Brazil, US, Mexico, and India, describes co-governance arrangements leading to more effective and efficient services.

The following two parts organize the contributions within the editors' distinction between co-production and co-management. In Part II, authors work mainly within the framework inherited from E. Ostrom's and focus on the micro-level analysis of the relation between citizens and services. Cases such as TimeBanking in the US (E. S. Cahn and C. Gray), self-organized networks of co-production in school education in the US (D. O. Porter), management of common-pool resources in housing cooperatives in Germany (T. Brandsen and J.-K. Heldemann), and Web 2.0 uses in co-production of public services in the Netherlands (A. Meijer) teach us about the contexts and the diversity of forms of co-production and provide examples of how the concepts can be empirically operationalized.

Part III operates mainly under the framework of co-management and co-governance, focusing on relations between TSOs and government. New organizational forms for joint service delivery in response to homelessness in Australia (K. Brown, R. Keast, J. Waterhouse, G. Murphy, and M. Mandell), co-management practices, skills, and competencies in local development partnerships for urban regeneration in three European cities (H. Schlappa), non-profit sector participation in co-management in Belgium (K. Dezeure and F. De Rynck), local regulation partnerships for traffic safety in Germany (M. Freise), and contractual relationships between non-profit organizations and local government in Japan (I. Tsukamoto) display differences and mixes between co-management and co-governance.

In Part VI, the target audiences of the book are rendered more apparent. The chapters raise topics concerning public services and administration as service quality, accountability and participation through studies of service quality in parents' cooperatives and municipal child care services (J. Vamstad), accountability in public services companies' codes of ethics in Italy and Norway (A. Calabro'), accountability relations in child care service provision in Flanders (D. Vancoppenolle and B. Verschuere), and parents' participation in pre-school services in France, Germany, and Sweden (V. Pestoff).

In the concluding chapter, the editors confirm that the concept of co-production can be applied at different analytical levels, reflects the current complex mixes of providers and roles in public service delivery, and bears normative value as a feature of NPG. The book provides a state of the art for a research agenda on co-production with further conceptual clarification and stabilization to allow for more ambitious comparative large scale studies.

In our opinion, researchers of public administration and management, and third sector researchers will find inspiration to pursue—perhaps together—the implications of the theoretical exploration of the concept of co-production under NPG to further breach the divide between governance and participation traditions (K. Dezeure and P. De Rynck). Further studies may wish to expanding the geographic reach of this agenda beyond Europe and North America to show, for instance, how concepts informed by ideas of democracy, such as co-construction (Y. Vaillancourt), are being operationalized.