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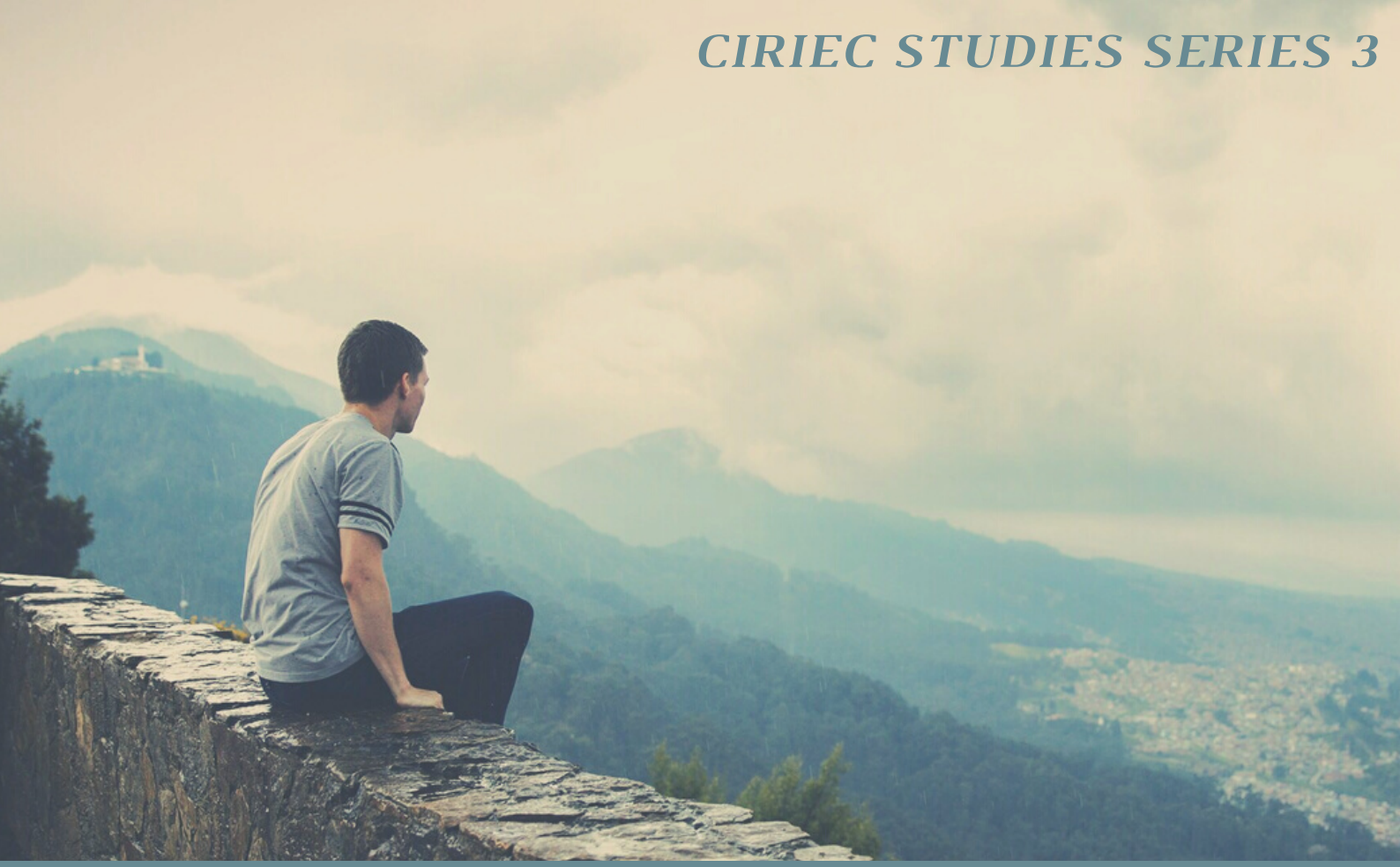

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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Conclusions and Directions for further Research

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As stated in the introduction by Philippe Bance, this book is the second of the CIRIEC transversal working group which studies public, social and solidarity economy partnerships (PSSEPs). The 2018 CIRIEC publication "Providing public goods and commons. Towards coproduction and new forms of governance for a revival of public action" focussed on governance mechanisms and co-production developments for public action in PSSEPs (CIRIEC, Bance, 2018). In the concluding chapter of the 2018 CIRIEC publication, Bance called for having a closer look at the transformation processes and how public and collective actions have changed in the last decades (Bance, 2018). The resulting co-production practices are path dependent. Influencing factors are for example: the degree of autonomy of local governments and regions, welfare state traditions, the role of SSE actors in a state, country-specific answers on how to prioritize the market, the government and the community logic and the roles of citizens in decision processes. The financial crisis, the climate disturbances, the rising societal inequalities and the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in new tasks for today's co-production partnerships.

The idea of having a closer look on the transformation processes and the transformative potential of co-production partnerships stood at the beginning of the current book. Against this background, the eleven chapters of the publication analyse empirical co-production practices or present conceptional ideas of various forms of co-production partnerships between social and solidarity economy (SSE), public sector actors and other involved stakeholders. While the main focus is on PSSEPs, other constellations of actors (e.g., inclusion of citizens or for-profit enterprises) are also studied.

A common theme in many CIRIEC publications is to shed light on how differences in the national, regional and local regulatory environments as well as administrative and

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welfare state traditions lead to different answers and practices. To study the same phenomenon in a *cross-country perspective* is also part of the working groups and publication culture within CIRIEC. The chapters with an empirical part focus most prominently on France (chapter 2 by Fragny & Zadra-Veil, chapter 3 by Lapoutte & Alakpa, chapter 10 by Fraisse and chapter 11 by Bance & Chassy), but also Italy (chapter 5 by Bassi & Fabbri), Germany (chapter 6 by Friedländer & Schaefer), Romania (chapter 4 by Ciascai & Defalvard) and Slovakia (chapter 7 by Murray Svidroňová, Nemec and Vaceková).

Furthermore, it is in line with the CIRIEC tradition, to study developments at the *macro, meso and micro level*. The authors of the publication present results about the changing roles of SSE partners or on co-production partnerships in various territorial government levels (supranational, national, regional or local level). Most chapters focus on the local and the regional levels. While chapter 1 to 3 and 10 have a local focus, the chosen territorial level in chapter 4 is a translocal one. Chapter 6 is the only chapter which addresses co-production arrangements on the local as well as on the regional level. Chapter 11 exclusively analyses developments on the regional level. Chapter 5 and 7 study co-production partnerships at the national levels. The two conceptional chapters, i.e. chapter 8 by Bauby and 9 by Ülgen have a supranational focus. Both chapters address necessary system changes on the macro-level.

1. From citizens-centred co-production to co-production partnerships

As stated in the introduction by Philippe Bance and also demonstrated by the recent review of co-production definitions by Loeffler and Bovaird (2021a), a plethora of different definitions of co-production exists. Instead of co-production, co-creation is sometimes used as the umbrella term (e.g., by Bassi & Fabbri in chapter 5).

From the beginning of the academic debate onwards, the active involvement of citizens in core public service delivery processes has been advocated not only as a form of resource pooling but also to give citizens an active voice in democratic decision-making processes. The rediscovery of the democratic benefits of direct citizen involvement in policy designing and policy implementation processes and the role of citizens as co-producers of public services has given rise to multiple academics' analyses in many disciplines for decades. Fiscal constraints in local government budgets also contributed to a greater involvement of citizens as co-producers, as Friedländer and Schaefer address in chapter 6.

The academic debate on co-production started with the ground-breaking work of Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues at workshops in "Political Theory and Policy Analysis" in a time where a massive centralization of urban governance arrangements was advocated in the US for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery (Ostrom, 1996: 1079). According to Ostrom there is no evidence for

the merits of centralized services in their empirical research on policing services in metropolitan areas (Ostrom, 1972; Ostrom, 1996).

In the past decades Ostrom also developed design principles under which conditions "The Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin, 1968) could be overcome by robust, self-governed *common pool resource institutions* (Ostrom, 2000; Ostrom, 2015). Ostrom's ideas have their origin in the neo-classical classification of public and private goods (Micken & Moldenhauser, 2021: 223). That understanding of commons is highly influenced by the idea that the output is a private good (Micken & Moldenhauser, 2021: 223) which creates a benefit for the individuals as the following quote shows: "Resource units, however are not subject to a joint use or appropriation […] but the resource system is subject to a joint use" (Ostrom, 2015: 31).

A *common* relies on principles of self-organisation and requires that various actors who do not belong to the same organisation work together and are willing to cooperate. The most frequently common pool resources studied by Ostrom and colleagues are water management, fishery, forestry, irrigation systems, urban commons and rangelands (Helferich & Euler, 2021). In recent years, the idea of the commons has also been extended to other fields (e.g., digital commons, climate change commons, creative or knowledge commons) (Helferich & Euler, 2021: 47). More and more a common is regarded as a social practice and commons are discussed in the context of social innovation. There is also an overlap between the debate about the principles and the practices of the sharing economy and the academic debate on the design principles and the social practices of commons.

While Ostrom's focus has been primarily on private consumption of common pool resources, authors in a Marxist tradition are advocating the idea of the commons as the better solution for a post-capitalistic society (e.g. De Angelies, 2013; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Gibson-Graham *et al.*, 2016; Helferich & Euler, 2021). Commons are seen as an alternative to the capitalistic private interest-driven world order with its preference for the market logic and its commodification of all aspects of (human and non-human) life.

The definitions of commons or a common good are as diverse as the definitions of co-production. Many authors, including the Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, stress that for co-production it is important that citizens are integrated in core public service delivery processes. Drawing the line between core and auxiliary processes remains a difficult task until today (Brandsen & Honingh, 2018). Unlike in the service marketing literature, where the passive involvement of an unconscious patient in a medical intervention is an example of co-production, the co-production literature requires an active involvement of citizens. The service management approach is still very present in some definitions of co-production. The recent definition by Brandsen and Honingh (2018) may serve as a reference. For them "co-production is generally associated with services citizens receive during the implementation phase of the production cycle" (Brandsen & Honingh, 2018: 13). The public service and the

service management focus is also obvious in the 1996 definition of Elinor Ostrom who defined co-production in the following way: Co-production is "the process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not in the same organisations. […] Co-production implies that citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services of consequences for them" (Ostrom, 1996: 1073). Some authors limit co-production to urban public services, as the definition by Percy (1984: 421) shows: "Co-production is the productive involvement urban residents can supply to the provision of urban services". Another twist of the active citizen involvement can be found in the 2009 book by John Alford who defines co-production as "any active behaviour by anyone outside the government agency which is conjoint with agency production or independent of it but prompted by some action of the agency" (Alford, 2009: 23). Alford continues that co-production is at least partly voluntary and either intentionally or unintentionally creates private and/or public value (Alford, 2009: 23). Voorberg and co-authors (2015) distinguish three roles citizen can have in the citizen-centred co-production partnerships, namely the role of citizens as co-designers, the role as co-implementer and the role of citizens as co-initiator for collective actions (Voorberg *et al.*, 2015: 15). The term co-production is also used to describe situations in which the state is not the only implementer of public policy, but shares responsibility with non-state organizations, from the private sector, the third sector, or both sectors at once (Vaillancourt, 2009, p. 285).

For some scholars, co-production is a sub-dimension of co-creations, for others co-production is the umbrella term. The classification of co-production as a sub-dimension of co-creation of public services can be found in chapter 5 of the book, where Bassi and Fabbri report the results of their thorough literature review on co-production. For Bassi and Fabbri, co-production occurs on the micro or service delivery level where citizens are at least in some parts involved as co-producers of public services. Other dimensions of co-creation on the service delivery level for Bassi and Fabbri (see figure 2 in chapter 5) are the co-design, the co-implementation and the co-evaluation dimensions. The *co-design dimension* focusses on the joint service configuration, while the *co-production dimension* involves direct interactions between front-line professionals and citizens (see chapter 5). According to Bassi and Fabbri, co-producers are engaged in the *co-implementation dimension* in joint decision-making and how the co-produced service should be maintained. In the *co-evaluation phase*, the involved partners provide suggestions for service improvement and service innovations.

In contrast to Bassi and Fabbri, co-production is used in a wider understanding in the *public management literature* which frequently addresses co-production within the framework of a public sector logic (Bovaird *et al.*, 2019 with further references). The four *Co-model* includes the following modes: Co-commissioning, co-designing, co-delivery and co-assessment (Bovaird *et al.*, 2019). Each of the four Co's include subdimensions. While *co-commissioning* includes co-planning of policies, co-prioritization of services (e.g., by participatory budgeting, vouchers or personalized budgets)

and co-financing of services (e.g., by crowdfunding), in the *co-designing* phase citizens (and communities) are involved via user fora, mandated or voluntary services user boards or in service design labs (Loeffler & Bovaird 2021a: 47 based on Bovaird, Loeffler, 2013). For Bovaird and Loeffler (2013), *co-delivery* of services and outcomes embraces "the co-management of services (e.g., managing public libraries, sport faculties, community centres) and the co-implementation of services" (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2021a: 47). Co-production of services designates activities or organizations in which users (or clients or citizens) participate in production and management on the same basis as employees (Laville, 2005). *Co-assessment* evaluates continuously or ex post the co-produced services and outcomes. While co-delivery is about citizens' action, the other three Co's are primarily about citizens' voices (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2021a: 48).

To complicate matters further, co-production has been linked more and more to providing a solution for dealing with complex or "wicked" societal challenges that cannot be solved by a single agency. Additionally, co-production has also addressed a means for *public value creation* in recent years (e.g., Alford, 2009; Bryson *et al.*, 2014; Strokosch & Osborne, 2021). In the public value literature on co-production, governments and public managers have a special role as guarantor of public values (Strokosch & Osborne, 2021: 120).

Looking at the *motives for co-production partnerships*, there are at least three: Co-production increases the (1) efficiency and (2) effectiveness of public services and public policies. The pooling of resources puts the responsibility for resource mobilisation on more shoulders and is also aiming for increasing the acceptance rate for public policies. On the service provision level, an envisaged result is that services are better tailored to the needs of citizens as service users. The third line of reasoning sees co-production partnerships as a means for addressing democratic deficits by giving citizens a more direct voice. Co-production is a distinct form of citizen participation with new rules for a participatory democracy (Strockosch & Osborne, 2021: 118). Elinor Ostrom is among the authors who put co-production in that context (Ostrom, 1996). Arnstein's ladder (Arnstein, 1969) with its nine levels of citizen participation has a profound impact on the classification of direct citizen involvement. Such an involvement can range from a non-participation over various degrees of tokenism to an effective citizen power (see Table 1 and Figure 1 in chapter 2). The democratic line of reasoning stresses the importance of citizen empowerment and of strengthening direct democracy. The latter is also regarded as a countermeasure against ballot box absenteeism.

Although the time horizons are blurred, the efficiency, the positive synergy effects as well as positive effects on the service quality are emphasized in the short term. In a medium-term perspective, positive effects on the service effectiveness or the public value creation are frequently mentioned benefits. The long-term perspective focusses on positive societal outcomes and the potential of co-production for transformational change on the system level. Such a change requires that old structures are destroyed

and new structures are created which, in the best case, makes room for social and societal innovation. To achieve social innovations, much room for experimenting is needed at all levels of co-production (Evers & Ewert, 2021).

At the beginning, co-production was limited to interactions between public sector actors and citizens at the service delivery level. While some authors still exclude co-production partnerships were organisations work together, as it is done in the 2021 Palgrave Handbook on Co-Production of Public Services and Outcomes (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2021b), another stream of academic literature extend the range of actors to organisations. That stream of research is linked to the academic debate on the benefits and the challenges of public policy and public service networks. In that context, different network structures (e.g., hierarchical or participatory, with or without a focal network partner), appropriate network governance mechanism, enablers and barriers for collaborative actions in networks as well as different actors (with or without the inclusion of for-profit enterprises or a wide range of other stake-holders) are studied. The focus of these forms of collaborative action in *co-production networks* can be (1) on the policy design, (2) policy implementation, (3) service design or (4) service implementation level. Public sector actors work together in co-production partnerships with those other actors.

Like in co-production arrangements between citizens and public agencies, co-production between organisational entities is discussed as an alternative to the re-ductionistic market logic of New Public Management with its preference for single-purpose agencies and antagonistic relationships between public administrations/ public agencies as commissioners of public services and those entities which are successful in the competition for a public service provision contract. The literature on network co-production partnerships also stresses the benefits of trustful collabo-rations between the partners and that it is essential to invest in network structures and to design appropriate network governance rules. Each network partner should contribute to the co-production partnership within their specific resources and expertise. In particular, the recent academic debate on commons stresses the principles of fairness, an open dialogue culture, the dynamic nature of a commons as a social practice and the principle of inclusion (Helferich & Euler, 2021; Micken & Moldenhauer, 2021). A common is an ecosystem which may include also non-human actors (Helferich & Euler, 2021).

Inherent in the debate on co-production is that one stream of academic contributions mainly focuses on the co-production processes and therefore put an emphasis on the rules of the game or (participative and self-regulating) governance mechanisms for enabling well-functioning co-production processes. Meanwhile, another, more recent stream of literature is more interested in the results or outcomes of co-production processes and, as public value scholars put it, the public value creation by the co-production partnerships. In this context, public or collective actions are also an outcome of co-production partnerships.

Summing up, the various perceptions of co-production are not only overlapping and intertwined but result in a plethora of definitions. To the differences in the definitions of co-production contributes that the understanding differs due to the chosen academic disciplines (e.g., economics, law, political sciences, public policy, public management). This leads to different perspectives under with co-production are studied. Today, the lines between co-creation, co-production and community involvement are blurred (Brandsen & Honingh, 2018: 9). On a more positive note, the richness of a truly multidisciplinary debate has the advantage to analyse co-production from different academic perspectives and for different purposes.

Summing up the definitions of co-production mentioned above, main differences are along the following lines:

- Co-productions as the wider concept (four Co-model) or co-production as a sub-dimension of co-creation;
- Limitation of co-production on interactions for public service delivery or extension to co-commissioning, co-designing and co-implementing of public policies;
- Variations in the exclusion or inclusion of co-producing partners: e.g., citizen-centred co-production versus co-production partnerships between organisations and/or other stakeholders;
- Differences in the typologies and/or phases of co-production;
- As well as co-production as a process in contrast to co-production as an outcome with a potential for transformational change.

2. Co-producing actors, co-production foci and dimensions

Looking at the included *actors in co-production partnerships*, narrower and wider actor constellations are analysed by the authors of the book. The book's main focus is on co-production forms between organisations. Compared to the academic debate about co-production in exclusively citizens-centred co-production partnerships, organisational co-production partnerships are a more recent topic. That is not surprising, because the co-productions debate started with co-production arrangements between citizens and governmental partners. Organisational partnerships are often studied as new forms of collaborative networks, new forms of public governance or under the aspect of changing relationships of the public and the SSEs partners. After years of the market logic and managerialism, which is inherent in NPM, New Public Governance is considered in the public management literature as an alternative model for co-production (e.g., Pestoff, Brandsen & Verschuere, 2011). New Public Governance brought back a more active role of citizens and other stakeholders as co-production partners.

Many chapters of the book focus primarily on *PSSEPs* at various territorial levels. Such partnerships can either have an institutionalized structure or can be the result of the division of labour between the public sector and the SSE partners.

Within the book, there is a strong spotlight on the *local or regional* PSSEPs. Chapter 1, by Greiling and Schinnerl, concentrates on the interactions of local governments and local public welfare entities on the one side and third sector organisations on the other side. Austria and Belgium share a corporatist welfare state tradition but differ in the autonomy of local governments. PSSEPs on the *local level* are also studied in the chapters 3 (Lapoutte and Alakpa) and chapter 10 (Fraisse). In chapter 6 (Friedländer & Schaefer), the authors discuss the role of municipal enterprises in the production of public goods in shrinking rural areas. Their chosen focus is a regional as well as a local one. Chapter 11, co-authored by Bance and Chassy, has a *regional focus*. They compare PSSEPs in two regions (Grand Est and Normandy).

In chapter 4 a specific partnership constellation in a social common is studied, namely between a big commercial enterprise (Carrefour) and the local Carrefour cooperative in Varast (Romania). After 1989 most agricultural cooperatives did not survive in Romania. According to the Ciascai & Defalvard, the created social common has a *translocal* structure.

Chapter 5 by Bassi and Fabbri and chapter 7 by Murray Svidroňová, Nemec and Vaceková present empirical findings of co-production PSSEPs at the *national* levels, i.e., Italy and Slovakia. In chapter 8, Bauby develops ideas for a new paradigm of public action on the European level.

The role, which *citizens* can play as co-producers in such partnerships, is addressed in some chapters. Chapter 2 by Fragny and Zadra-Veil, which refers to the living labs in the South of France, addresses a wide local actor constellation including various stakeholder groups (public, private, third sector partners as well as citizens). The living labs are classified as a knowledge common. In particular, the authors analyse the roles of citizens as contributors to the local living labs in Bordeaux, Lyon and Marseille. Citizens are also referred to as co-producers in chapter 6, co-authored by Friedländer and Schaefer. Fiscal restraints of local governments have led to a situation in deprived rural areas in Germany, where citizen involvement in core public services is necessary for maintaining a range of local public services.

In his conceptional chapter Bauby takes up Ostrom's ideas of the *commons*. Due to the focus on the macro level of co-production and therefore on system transformation requirements, the specific role of citizens is not discussed. Ostrom's idea of an artificial divide is referred to in chapter 9 by Ülgen, whose main theoretical anchor is Polanyi's Great Transformation (Polanyi, 2001).

Moving on to the *foci* of co-production partnerships, the academic debate on co-production partnerships focused exclusively on the service delivery level in its early days. Today, one can observe an extension to the *public policy level* (policy co-commissioning and policy implementation). Brandsen and Pestoff (2006) distinguished three different forms of relationship between the citizens and public sector actors in the context of citizen-centred co-production partnerships, namely the direct involvement of citizens in the policy making process (co-governance on the

macro level), co-creation in the policy implementation process (meso level) and co-production on the service delivery or micro-level (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006).

Compared to the broad stream of empirical studies on co-production partnerships between public partners and citizens, empirical evidence on co-production partnerships between organisational actors on the co-commissioning, co-designing and co-implementing of public policies is in an earlier stage. Such policy partnerships are addressed in some chapters. The policy design aspect is a topic in chapter 1. Chapter 2 refers to living labs as local open innovation ecosystems. Chapter 3 focuses on a food policy PSSEP in Lyon. Chapter 10 also focusses on a local co-production partnership in France. Chapters 8 and 9 provide ideas for policy co-production partnerships on the macro level.

With respect to the *co-production dimensions*, the main focus is on co-production partnerships on the meso level, i.e., primarily the co-management level for policy implementation, and the micro-level, i.e., collaborative public service delivery. The involvement of PSSEPs in policy implementation and service delivery does not mean that PSSEPs form a formal partnership. Co-management and service delivery can also occur in the division of labour between SSE actors and public actors. Changes in the roles of SSE entities are addressed in chapter 4, 7 and 11.

Regarding the *four co-creation dimensions* displayed in figure 2 in chapter 5 by Bassi and Fabbri, no empirical examples are provided for the co-implementation dimension in the way Bassi and Fabbri are defining it, namely as a joint decision making between professionals and users to maintain service provision. The aspect of improvement and providing a stimulus for innovation is a topic only a few chapters focus on. The living labs, addressed in chapter 2, may serve as an example. Also, the two conceptional chapters by Bauby and Ülgen underline the innovative potential. The authors of chapter 7 refer explicitly to social enterprises as social innovation drivers.

Concerning the *four Co-model* of Bovaird and co-authors, the most neglected co-production dimension in the chapters is the co-assessment phase. In that dimension, the co-production partners should be evaluating the implemented policies or public services. Living labs, which are part of the co-designing phase, are being addressed in chapter 2. The chapter by Friedländer and Schaefer refers to co-financing, which is in the Bovaird *et al.* (2019) typology part of the co-commissioning phase.

3. Transformational potential of co-production partnerships

The academic debate about co-production focuses primarily on the positive effects (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2021a; Bassi & Fabbri in chapter 5), while not being blind that there are limiting barriers to the potential of co-production partnerships. They are not only time-consuming but also prone to an inherent mismatch between the societal status of those citizens and groups, who are active in co-production partnerships, and those who have a long record as recipients of the output and outcome of

these co-production partnerships. The lack of involvement of people who are experts through experience is an inherent problem. Fraisse (chapter 10) stresses that co-production policy partnerships should include a diverse set of stakeholders for achieving a better effectiveness. Those who are the target groups of co-constructed public polices and services should have a voice in these partnerships.

Moreover, co-production partnerships have to deal with inherent *tension between different logics* and role perceptions of the involved partners. Various professionals not only need to interact with each other in these partnerships, but collaborations with citizens and other civil society actors without a professional background are also required. Tensions between professionals and volunteers are a well-known challenge in third sector organisations, too. Clashes between the professional mindset and the mindset of other civil society actors are likely. It depends on the openness for each other, if and at which costs the tensions can be softened in co-production partnerships. That includes the ability to build trustful relationship among the involved partners. In chapter 10, Fraisse calls for an ethics of listening and dialogue in which all partners are treated as equals.

Power asymmetries are also a limiting factor. The dominance of the public partner in the PSSEPs is addressed as a hindrance for the transformational potential by many contributors of the book. One way to deal with this problem is to include elected officials as power promotors, as suggested in chapter 10 by Fraisse. Another way to deal with the power asymmetries is to make specific investments for building a culture of dialogue and, therefore, to take steps to reducing existing power asymmetries. In addition, *willingness* and capabilities to collaborate at all levels of the co-production partnerships are important factors, as Bassi and Fabbri stress for PSSEPs in chapter 5. In their conclusion they provide a table with boosting factors for PSSEPs. Additionally, to the willingness and capabilities to collaborate on both sides on all governance levels, they identify the avoidance of a pure economic logic on the public sector side and the willingness to collaborate with other third sector organisations on the side of the SSE partners as key factors. Furthermore, professionals should work together and overcome the latent or open conflicts between them.

The aspect, that co-production partnerships are more effective when they are institutionalised, is addressed in a few chapters. The empirical examples presented in the book indicate that a lot of attention should be paid to the appropriate design and enforcement of *governance mechanisms* in co-production partnerships. Due to the inherent complexity, co-production partnerships need explicit rules of the games which are jointly designed and modified. Additionally, clear conflict resolution mechanisms are essential. Sources of conflicts are not only the above mentioned different professional logics and power asymmetries, but also the different perspectives of the involved actors. In line with an economic reasoning, Ostrom (2000: 41) called for graduated sanction mechanisms in cases of non-appropriate behaviours in the partnerships. Other authors, among them Fraisse, prefer an

ethical approach of discourse where the partners treat each other as equals, an ethics of listening exists, and arguments are exchanged in a fair discourse.

Furthermore, co-production partnerships also need to have adaptive capacities, as stressed in chapter 3 by Lapoutte and Alakpa. As a theoretical framework, these authors use the concept of organisational resilience. Resilient co-production partnerships should not only have the ability to absorb distributive shocks but also have a high strategic renewing potential and a high ability for situational learning and self-reflections.

Based on their empirical findings in Slovakia, Murray Svidroňová, Nemec and Vaceková identify drivers and barriers of co-production partnerships in different institutional settings, i.e., employment, education, health and the use of abandoned properties. The findings show that attention should be paid to setting specific characteristics in addition to the already mentioned willingness and capabilities to cooperate. Moving on to the barriers, the lack of financial resources is a universal barrier for Murray Svidroňová, Nemec and Vaceková. They also draw the attention to the many field-specific nuances in legislative and bureaucratic barriers.

In chapter 10 additional favourable factors for co-production partnerships are identified. Fraisse stresses that there are more opportunities at the beginning of co-production partnerships. Furthermore, co-production partnerships are more suitable for the local level.

With respect to the transformational potential of co-productions partnerships, Bance and Chassy are quite sceptical that the destruction of the old structures in PSSEPs will lead to better ways of organizing collective action soon enough, as the implementation of the Hamon law in France favours an economic orientation of SSE actions in both regions that are studied (Grand Est and Normandy). Bauby and Ülgen, in their respective contributions to this book, are the most optimistic ones in their vision of the reconstruction of collective action. Both portray the current situation in a very negative way.

The chapters of the book which empirically analyse the transformation processes show that the transformation processes often have an evolving nature. New arrangements are emerging. More radical changes are advocated in the non-empirical chapters. The failure of economic liberalisation serves both authors as an outset to recommend a transformational change towards a new social model within the European Union (Bauby, chapter 8) or for dealing with the pitfalls of self-regulation of the financial industries (Ülgen, chapter 9). Both authors make a strong case for the benefits of the creation of new forms of public action.

4. Directions of further research

A motivation for this publication was the observation that organisational co-production partnerships have gained importance in the past decade for organizing public or collective actions. The chapters analysed co-production practices in various countries and at various government levels or developed ideas for co-production partnerships for overcoming societal divides.

Looking at the various *actors*, most chapters concentrated on PSSEPs. While there is an established body of research on the changing nature of government and third sector relationships, wider *sets of partner constellations* are rarely studied in great depth. When organisations and other civil society actors collaborate in partnerships, always the question arises about the fair inclusion of the legitimate interests of those who are less organized or do not have a professional background. The inclusion of those who are experts by experience has always been a particular challenge and still is. If one studies wider-actor constellations, another under-researched aspect is how many partners can be included without endangering a real dialogue and stable partnership structures. Furthermore, in recent years, for-profit companies have been more active to show that they also contribute to the public value creation. This started with corporate volunteering initiatives and a greater focus on documenting their corporate social responsibility activities as a part of their reputation management. At the municipal level there are business with a self-commitment towards local public value creation. Questions about how to include for-profits, public partners, third sector organisations and social movements in co-production partnerships at the same time need a lot more attention.

This book provides quite a few examples for *policy co-production partnerships*, a theme which is not as prominent in academic research as are public service-delivery partnerships. While the academic debate on *policy co-implementation* is a little bit more advanced, the aspect of *policy co-commissioning* in organisational co-production partnerships is in its infancy. The inclusion of the target groups of these policies remains challenging. The danger exists that the policies are designed by professionals over the heads of the main target groups. Another under-researched challenge in policy-commissioning is if, and to what degree, the non-public partners act as promotors of their own interest.

Moving on *to public service delivery partnerships*, there is a broad stream of literature focussing on tensions between the front-line officials and citizens as service recipients or customers. Much less attention has been paid to tensions and conflicts at higher-up governance levels. The public governance literature as well as the literature on co-production of common goods sometimes seems too optimistic that the inherent tensions between the involved partners will decrease over time, once a co-production partnership has a stable working structure. Frequently the importance of trust-based relationships, the willingness to collaborate and an openness for

integrating different perspectives and professional logics are stressed. However, the involved co-production partners are themselves evolving over time. Every new election might lead to changes of the political partners and the pursued strategic priorities. Changes in the composition of the third sector partners and other civil society actors are resulting in evolving intra-network relationships. The ties between the network partners need to be adjusted. Major changes which affect the strategic partnership goals most likely lead to intensive reforming processes, while some changes on the daily work routines can be more easily buffered by the existing organisational trust. Over time, co-production partnerships, which are always hybrids, also may come to different answers as to how to prioritise community, market and government logics. The impacts of changes over time and the mechanisms to reduce structural and personal tensions on the higher-up governance levels need a lot more attention in the scientific discussion.

As already outlined, the academic debate about *commons* has been extended. At the beginning was the idea of resource pooling. The neoclassical typology of private, public and common goods was dominant. This has changed. For Fournier, who uses the example of rural gardens: “Commoning is as much about of production as of distribution […]. Commons are places where people develop new forms of sociality, knowledge and cultural exchange […]. They offer a space for the development of relations based on cooperation and sharing rather than private appropriation and exclusion” (Fournier, 2013: 442). Essential for a common is a shared common value orientation which is developed jointly by the community. That requires the ability of self-reflection and learning in commons.

Today, one body of literature puts *commons in the context of social innovations*. Living labs are just one example. Energy communities, community care and health communities are other fields which are worthwhile to study in order to identify new innovative forms of public action. So far, the body of knowledge about the medium and long-term impacts of these innovative forms of public is at an early stage. Furthermore, the scientific discussion is dominated by field-specific studies. This may include descriptions of the innovative potential as well as of barriers. With the dominance of area or field focus, there is a lack of research on cross-sectoral studies about the innovative potential and what makes the commons resilient.

Another stream of literature on the *commons* frames them as a *social practice for post-capitalistic societies*. The focus is on transformative potential at the system level. It would be interesting to get a deeper empirical insight about the drivers and barriers for a system change, and what are the characteristics of highly resilient commons. Furthermore, more research is needed about which is an enabler for maintaining the transformative potential.

Moving on to the *territorial levels*, there is a dominance of studies which focus on the local level. The transformational potential at the regional level, which is addressed in chapters 7 and chapter 11 of the present publication is much lesser researched.

In an European Union which puts a focus on innovative regions, and against the background of a growing economic gap between cities and rural areas, it would be important to study co-production at the regional level and therefore complement to a higher degree the empirical research on urban governance co-production partnerships.

Finally, recalling the *various co-production dimensions*, there is a lack of empirical studies which focus on the co-assessment phase. The literature on public accountability of third sector organisations shows that NPM has led to far too many upward accountability obligations while neglecting the downward accountability. How a participatory co-assessment can work is a topic which needs to be studied in more depth. This includes how learning and self-reflection capacities in co-production partnerships could be increased.

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