Merging Policy and Management Thinking to Advance Policy Theory & Practice: Understanding Co-Production as a New Public Governance Tool

Michael Howlett[1,2]
Anka Kekez Koštro [3]
Ora-orn Poocharoen[2]

[1]Department of Political Science
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby BC, Canada

[2]Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore
Singapore

[3]Faculty of Political Science
University of Zagreb
Zagreb, Croatia

Abstract:

One of the central pillars of policy studies linking the field to public management is the study of policy tools or instruments. This is because the use of policy tools includes management considerations in their design and implementation, and studies of tool selection and use have benefitted from the insights of public administration and management theories in the past. This is true in the case of traditional tools such as public participation, state enterprises, communications strategies and the like which have been the subjects of studies in traditional public administration and new public management (NPM) thinking. One growing area of tool use which has received very little treatment at all to date, however, concerns recent trends towards the increased co-production of many public services which is a predominant feature of works in the New Public Governance (NPG) approach to public management. Using elderly and social care services in Croatia and Thailand as illustrative cases, this article examines co-production in the context of both the policy tools literature and public management theory and show how both fields can contribute to enhancing understandings of co-production in modern governance and policy-making.

Introduction: Co-production and its Implications for Public Management and Policy Studies

The growing complexity of modern societies, the emergence of pro-market ideologies in government and politics, recurring fiscal crises and a host of other factors have in recent decades placed administrative reforms high on the political agenda and generated a substantial amount of academic inquiry and thinking about the subject (Kettle 2000; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). This has led to increased thinking about how best to decrease the rigidity and cost of traditional bureaucratic government and has driven new concepts and thinking both in the fields of Public Management and Public Policy (Peters and Pierre 1998; Peters 2011).

In advanced democracies in North America and Western Europe in particular, a quest to redefine the role of the public sector has sponsored two reform waves in the 1980s and 1990s which moved the study and practice of public administration away from a traditional public administration focus on organizational structure and behaviour towards a new more management-centered focus (Aucoin 1995; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Lane 2000). The first, New Public Management (NPM) wave of reforms relied on the replacement of traditional hierarchical or bureaucratic tools such as regulations and public enterprises by

markets (Dunleavy and Hood 1994; Ferlie et al 1996), while the later New Public Governance (NPG) wave has looked to find solutions based on the inclusion of a wider spectre of actors in the governing process, specifically by enhancing the role played by civil society, social enterprises and networks in the provision of public services (Osborne 2006; Bryson et al 2014).

Both these waves of reform focused on new policy tools or new arrangements of older instruments as a means of surmounting existing problems and improving administrative practices and policy outcomes (O'Flynn 2007; Howlett 2011). These ways of thinking hence involved an extension of traditional public administrative studies not only into the realm of management but also into the realm of public policy studies which had a rich tradition of studies of policy instrument use in policy implementation (Salamon 1989 and 2002; Hood 1986; Hood and Margetts 2007; Howlett 2011; Hill and Hupe 2014).

As such, many of the distinctions in orientation and subject matter which used to characterize these three fields have largely dropped away. Administrative studies now regularly cite both management and policy concerns and concepts and the same is true of works in management thinking. Policy studies, however, have been a little slower in moving in this direction and part of the purpose of this paper is to show how a synthesis of these three approaches can provide greater insights into policy questions like policy tool design than an approach which focuses on only one or two of these fields.

Conceptualizing Co-production as a Policy Tool

A very good example of the need and benefit of merging aspects of administrative, management and policy thinking concerns the approach to analyzing one of the major categories of policy tools or instruments intimately linked with the development of New Public Governance: "self-service" provision (Mizrahi 2012). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of 'co-production' or the use of combined state and non-state actors to

produce or inform public service delivery (Alford 1998; Pestoff 2006; Osborne 2006). Although an age-old practice in many jurisdictions and commonly used in the private sector, the phenomenon of joint-provision of public services went largely unrecognized as a public sector instrument and strategy until recent years when administrative and policy studies 'discovered ' its ubiquitiousness in searching for alternative modes of service delivery to state administration (Poocharoen and Ting, 2013; Pestoff and Brandsen 2009; Pestoff et al 2012 and 2006). This (re)discovery and designation of co-production as a policy tool has raised a number of administrative and management issues with which public policy theory is now grappling. Better linking public policy analysis to administrative and management theory holds the potential to help both policy scholars and practitioners come to terms with and employ instrument more effectively than they have hitherto done.

Policy Tool Theory

Policy instruments are techniques of governance which, one way or another, involve the utilization of state authority or its conscious limitation (Dahl and Lindblom 1953; Kirschen 1964; Edelman 1964; Anderson 1977). A policy design consists of specific types of policy tools or instruments that are bundled or combined in a principled manner into policy 'portfolios' or 'packages' in an effort to attain often multiple policy goals and aims. That is, policies are composed of several elements, distinguishing between abstract or theoretical/conceptual goals, specific program content or objectives and operational settings or calibrations which affect which tools are selected for these purposes (Hall 1993, Howlett and Cashore 2007, Howlett and Cashore 2009).

Most policy objectives can, in theory, be accomplished by a number of instruments as most instruments are to some degree `substitutable'. Thus a government seeking to promote health care for the population, for example, could theoretically leave it entirely to the family

to provide health services, with the competence and availability of family members determining who gets how much and at what cost. Or a government might go to the other extreme and provide all health services through its own administrative agency, paid for directly out of its general tax revenues, leaving no room for the market or other private organizations. In between the two extremes lie a range of other instruments, including exhorting the population to keep healthy, subsidizing those who are poor, and regulating doctors and hospitals (Salamon 1989; Bemelmans-Videc et al 1998) and various mixes of state, market and other kinds of tools are typically found in most policy sectors (Miller 1990; Howlett 2004).

The systematic study of policy instruments in the 1970s and 1980s by policy scholars quickly generated a large academic literature on the subject. Studies generated useful taxonomies (Tupper and Doern 1981; Hood 1986; Vedung 1997; Howlett 1991) and shed light on significant subjects such as the reasons behind shifts in patterns of instrument choices associated with the waves of privatization and deregulation which characterized the period (Howlett and Ramesh 1993). In the case of 'substantive' policy instruments, or those instruments intended to directly affect the nature, types, quantities and distribution of the goods and services provided in society, a great deal of conceptual progress occurred over the past two decades (Salamon 2002), much of it informed by administrative and management studies into the nature of the New Public Management thinking which underlay many efforts at reducing the size of government and enhancing the use of market-based policy tools (Christensen and Laegreid 2008 and 2012; Bemelmans-Videc 1997).

Co-production as a Policy Tool

Originally, the concept of co-production related primarily to the goal of involvement of citizens or clients in production, i.e. direct user involvement, either in the public or private sectors. It generated interest among public administration scholars in America in the 1970s

and the 1980s (Parks et al. 1999; Brandsen and Pestoff 2006) and experienced a rival in the decades after the turn-of-the-century (Brandsen et al 2012).

Even though co-production emerged as a concept that emphasises citizens' engagement in policy design and delivery, its meaning evolved to include broader locus of political societal relations (Pestoff and Brandsen, 2009). As Brandsen and Pestoff (2009) note, co-production is a tool for policy development and implementation which "is based on the assumption of an active, participative populace of consumer producers" (p. 14).[1] Co-production in this sense places focus on joint action of different government levels, public and non-public actors. For implementation processes this implies production and consumption of public services through utilization of resources and skills that are available to national and local government bodies, public service professionals, nongovernment organisations and citizens (Alford, 1998; Poocharoen and Ting, 2013).

Crucially, citizen participation is typically voluntary meaning it exists as a positive externality reducing production and delivery costs of public services, a situation which makes it very attractive to governments seeking cost reductions in public service delivery, especially ones favorable to notions of 'social enterprise' and enhanced community participation and goods-in-themselves (Parks et al 1981; Salamon 1981 and 1987).

While the concept is somewhat problematic in distinguishing some aspects of co-production from the observation of norms of citizenship – so that not breaking the law does not necessarily imply so much a client-service relationship but rather a normative socio-political one (Sundeen 1985; Warren 1987; Warren et al 1982) - co-production can be considered a policy tool in so far as it is a conscious strategy or action intended to result in enhanced engagement of citizens and their associations in goods and service delivery, offsetting the use of other instruments such as public organizations or private contracts (Hood, 1984).

The Need for a Cross-Disciplinary Approach

Aspects of co-production as a policy tool have intrigued scholars of instrument choice for several decades (see Salamon 1981 and 2001). Since there are costs to the use of citizen's time and limits to the extent to which a largely untrained, often typically voluntary group of actors can replace professional experts and administrators (Pestoff and Brandsen 2009), the circumstances surrounding its creation use and management are of great interest to students of policy tools.

Recent work on the subject from a policy perspective has attempted to distinguish different types of co-production depending on whether or not citizens are involved in specific aspects of policy making, from implementation to formulation (see above distinctions between co-production and co-management and co-governance) and between the different modes of activity citizens can exercise in co-production (from a passive client to an active coproducer (Pestoff 2012) and to distinguish between different patterns of formulation and implementation involved in its use (Bovaird and Loefler 2012).

However few works have examined (a) the reasons why a government might choose to implement a specific co-governance strategy and (b) the management implications thereof. It is precisely at these points, however where studies of public administration, public management and public policy intersect and policy studies can benefit from the insights of these other two disciplines.

Co-production, Public Management and Public Administration Theory: Insights for Policy Theory from New Public Management to New Public Governance Analyses

Studies in fields such as political science, economics, law and public administration have all underlined that translating government aims and objectives into practice is not as simple as might first appear. Policies are made by a variety of different actors interacting with each other over a relatively long period of time within the confines of a set of political and

economic institutions and governing norms. Each actor exhibits different interests, ideas and resources, and each operates within a climate of uncertainty caused both by context and time-specific knowledge and information limitations. In addition, the inherent limits caused by the game-like nature of policy-making interactions and relationships - that is, in which what is in one actor's best interest depends in part on the activities of other actors involved in the same, and other, ongoing policy processes – adds further complications to addressing issues, and formulating, deciding-upon, implementing and evaluating policies to deal with them (Bressers and O'Toole 2005 and 1998).

Understanding who these actors are and how they act is thus a critical aspect of all public policy-making activity, including policy instrument selection and use involved in policy design. Administrative, legal and economic studies have also shown, however, that the institutional structure in which these actors operates affects the types of resources and ideas they possess and the overall level of government capacity, crucial factors affecting policy decisions and actions. Similarly, different instruments have different impacts and capabilities in-themselves which affect their efficiency and effectiveness in any given policy context. In all of these aspects, public management and administrative practices and theories can be very informative and useful from a policy studies standpoint.

As set out above, the recent emphasis and interest in co-production in general is viewed as part of a wave of "New Public Governance " innovations in public management and administrative studies and practices. New Public Management thinking placed the focus on performance and serving clients, while importing businesslike ideas and techniques into the functioning of public bureaucracy, replacing an old public administration focus on organizational structure and behaviour with a new emphasis on management Envisioning effective, efficient and better-quality public service, management reform supplemented input-

based controls typical of traditional public administration with output-based measurement and management (Pierre, 2012).

This implied and created a new entrepreneurial role for elected officials who were supposed to keep authority over goal-setting but allow for flexible implementation (Hood, 1991; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Klijn, 2012). Part of these efforts to stimulate the effectiveness and efficiency of government was thus intertwined with the empowerment of public managers who were allowed to define performance outputs, choose or favor specific kinds of policy tools and steer the implementation of a large portion of services towards non-governmental or private actors and relatively autonomous agencies within the public sector (Peters, 2011, Pierre, 2012).

In real life of public administration, NPM involved an effort to separate policy formation and policy implementation activities accompanied by managerial reliance on competitive contracts and inclination toward specialisation (disaggregation), decentralization and privatization of service provision (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Lane 2000, Kettl, 2000). Seen from this managerial and administrative perspective, even though NPM introduced reduction of the control of political executive over the implementation process, it did not abandon a reliance on central steering of public services and their delivery by state or market providers. By favouring contracts over command and specification of standards of performance over assignment of explicit tasks, it took away the role of the chief executive from the government, enhanced the role of market-based providers but gave new authority to state managers, regulator and inspectors (Hupe and Hill, 2014).

In this view, a substantial move away from the top-down understanding of public management occurred during the nineteen-nineties when some of these remaining aspects of hierarchy and elitism were abandoned. This sometimes occurred in the effort to include more inclusive forms of participation into social coordination, based on interest or social solidarity

(Hoppe, 2010) as well as in the effort to continue savings and off-loading of previously state-provided services to other providers, in this case to the non-profit, voluntary and community sectors (Salamon 1987). This New Public Governance thinking (Osborne, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2014) focused on managerial and administrative attention on activities such as collaborative or 'network' governance (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004; Ansell and Gash 2008), 'democratic governance' (Bevir 2007; Sorensen and Torfing, 2005), or just 'governance' when using the term in the sense of a strategy employed to "govern and manipulate the design of institutions and mechanisms in order to shape choices and preferences" (Levi-Faur, 2012:8).

In policy tools terms, the New Public Governance (NPG) proposed replacement of hierarchies and markets as central coordination mechanisms by networks of actors stemming from the government, market and civil society. The proposal was followed by a vision of a more informed, flexible and inclusive government with the ability to cope with a complex reality (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011) based largely on the use of procedural policy instruments designed to promote more bottom-up involvement in all aspects of policy-making, from agenda-setting to policy evaluation (Rhodes 1994; Howlett 2000; Milward and Provan 2000) but also involving a significant component of co-production activity

That is, a focus on networks of interdependent but autonomous actors combined with the idea of working in partnerships and contracting out goods and service delivery characteristic of NPM thinking led towards the articulation of a new administrative model aimed at producing joint results between governments and citizens and with a stress on citizen participation in both policymaking and service delivery (Klijn, 2012; Peters, 2011). Unlike NPM, which applied competitive contracts in order to foster governmental flexibility without really abandoning a state-led approach, NPG endorsed the establishment of more horizontal relationships between governmental and other social organisations. Instead of precise

specification of outputs and conduction of monitoring, the essential tools for NPG are network management and co-production (Sorensen, 2007; Hill and Hupe, 2014, Klijn, 2012; Agranoff, 2007).

Much theorizing and studying of NPG to date has focussed on mapping practices of effective network management in order to improve service delivery (Eikenberry, 2007; O' Toole and Meier, 2004). Co-production, however, is an archetypal example of a policy tool which fits the needs and aspirations of NPG thinking and both policy and administrative and managerial studies can benefit from its more systematic analysis.

Key empirical questions remain in this effort. How co-production actually comes about in practice, for example, remains little understood. What roles do government, political and societal actors play in this process? In order to illustrate the insights for policy studies that can flow from incorporation of administrative and managerial perspectives, and vice versa, in what follows below we examine these questions through study of the fate to two co-production initiatives dealing with elderly and social care in Croatia and Thailand. As these studies show, different constellations of actors were involved in the creation of these initiatives and led to the adoption of different tool mixes with quite different outcomes.

How Does Co-Production Arise? Case Studies of Social Services Co-Production in Croatia

Co-production in Croatia emerged in the social services sector in the course of public sector reforms which were induced with elections and a change of government in 2000. After a decade of state-building, war and cumbersome transition from communist-era policies and practices, elections in the dawn of new millennium marked the beginning of a deeper consolidation process associated with efforts to accede to the EU. Within that process, significant efforts were made to reform social services, as a core element of public administration that had been left largely unchanged since communist times.

The reformist quest toward greater effectiveness, efficiency and equity took place under pressure to keep political control over social rights and services for electoral purposes (Stubbs and Zrinščak, 2012). This pressure was the consequence of a high level of party penetration into state institutions and the public sector, the catalyst of which was the dominant rule of one party (Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)) in Croatia, which had been in power almost uninterruptedly over a 20-year period of transition and consolidation.[2]

Upon regaining power and holding it till the end of 2011, the Croatian Democratic Union combined a reformist program with own strategy of spreading clientelistic networks across services which were considered as the appropriate platforms for exploitation of state resources in terms of jobs, contracts and partnership agreements. Acceptance of the reformist turn for HDZ government meant supporting the transfer of "reform packages" that were promoted and partly conditioned by various international actors such as the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations. In the social policy area these package involved a strong emphasis on decentralization, diversification of providers, "de-etatisation" and the increase of user's participation in the service provision. In a layered pattern of administrative reforms (Christensen and Laegreid 2012), this fused the emphasis on performance management and the outsourcing of NPM with a NPG related focus on instruments relying upon co-production with citizens and local community.

The merger of this hybrid reform content with the clientelistic strategy of the ruling party, however, resulted in a very uneven, and sometimes even inconsistent, integration of co-production efforts. Two cases of personal assistance for persons with disabilities and home care services for the elderly illustrate how in one sector services reform induced substantial engagement of users and their organizations in successful service delivery, while in the other the ruling party used co-production as a cover for the distortion of implementation with patronage practices resulting in a very poor outcome from a policy perspective. Both case

studies illustrate, however, the value of combining managerial, administrative and policy perspectives in arriving at these conclusions.

Personal Assistance and Home Care Service Co-production in Croatia: Same Tool, Different Results

Personal assistance and home care services co-production reforms were both developed in in Croatia during the course of reforms to the Ministry for Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity (MFVAIS) between 2003 to 2011. Often referred by social policy actors as "the Ministry of Pilot Programs", in 2004 the MFVAIS established a pilot home care services project, and in 2006 the same was done with personal assistance. While the former service was meant to reach wider population of elderly, personal assistance targeted people with the most severe types and degrees of disability.

Inspiration for the design of both services were the principles, goals and instruments related to New Public Governance thinking. Accordingly, the reforms envisioned the empowerment of beneficiaries and their involvement in service delivery. That was to be achieved not through de-concentrated network of state social care institutions but via partnerships between state and local, typically non-profit community actors to jointly provide beneficiaries with help in everyday activities such as personal hygiene, shopping and cooking. In addition, personal assistance included daily support in upbringing the user's children, traveling and work related activities. The content of service in both cases was to be flexibly framed so that specific services could be arranged and delivered together with the beneficiary who was regarded as the subject of action, instead of as the object of help. Empowerment through co-production also targeted service providers, household and personal assistants, who were recruited from unemployed members of beneficiaries' communities and families.

When established, both services initially covered just few localities, but they gradually grew into nationwide programs and by 2011, and the change of government, were supported

by significant funds while encompassing a substantial number of beneficiaries. After the change of government and the abolishment of MFVAIS in 2012 both programs were placed under the umbrella of a new Ministry of Social Policy. Even though managers in the new Ministry wanted detach themselves from many of the 'pilot initiatives' developed by MFVAIS, they decided not only to keep but even to expand the program of personal assistance. On a contrary, however, home care ended up on the new government's list for complete restructuring.

The reason for the difference was the strong linkage existing between the elderly care system with the political goals and patronage practices of the former HDZ dominated government. Development of home care provision was organized by means of partnership agreements– with the Ministry signing a contract on co-funding and cooperation with the units of regional/local self-administration, which then managed the provision itself or in partnership with NGOs or homes for the elderly. Decisions on funding of home care service were done through an open call and the process of competition among counties and municipalities which expressed interest for service provision. However, even though documents outlining selection of the recipients of funding for home care embodied the idea of enabling local sense of ownership, in practice they proved to be politically controlled and subject to party penetration. Not only were members of committee for scoring applications and creating the funding ranking list appointed by the Minister, but the Minister was also responsible for approving the final list of cities and municipalities that would be funded. In that final step, as indicated by interviews conducted by the authors with actors participating in selection process, additional political criteria - such as affiliation of mayor or/and party structure of the representative council - were informally applied on the top of formal criteria and the ranking list changed accordingly. This resulted in a very unbalanced structure of fund recipients. In 2011, which was the last year of the open call procedure, the number of signed

agreements for home care services encompassed 59 counties and municipalities, out of which in 88% of them the mayor was a member of parties acting as national incumbents - HDZ and its coalition partners – although the HDZ and its partners were in power in only 66% of the 576 Croatian counties and municipalities.

This analysis shows how applying discretion over funding decisions to the minister allowed the over-award of contracts to local party activists as executive politicians misused the role of joiners-up - guarantors or co-production arrangements between multiple stakeholders. Moreover, NPG's strong reliance on soft management mechanisms, such as trust or horizontal coordination, enhanced the politicians' ability to integrate clientelistic networks into co-productive home care provision. Due to lack of nationally applied oversight mechanisms and loose vertical couplings between the civil servants in the Ministry and funded units of regional/local self-administration, the actual application of co-production was dependent on the leadership style of the local and national political executives. Accordingly, while in some counties and municipalities politicians left micro-management to home care team leaders or community organisations, in others local governments decided to directly manage and politicize care provision. This politicization of home care in most cases implied that decisions on recruitment of home care staff were made, not only on the basis of candidate's competences but also in accordance with her/his party affiliation. In that way, staff recruitment became the point in which the trust as management mechanism was often replaced with clientelistic arrangements in which the biggest concern for local political executive became recruiting party supporters as service providers and, when election time comes, monitoring if they were still loyal or even are actively lobbying for their party or candidates.

The second case of co-production, dealing with personal assistance, however, had similar institutional roots as the home care, but its fate proved to be quite different: reformist

mechanisms inspired by NPG were consistently adopted without clientelistic distortions. A key factor here had to do with the manner in which the co-production arrangement originated. Unlike with home care in which a top-down process was followed in which the political executive was the initiator and prime designer of the service, the inspiration for personal assistance services came from civil society. Accordingly, while partnership arrangements for home care meant a focus on local level governments in a managerial and administrative role, in designing personal assistance government proved to be keen on developing a network consisting of disabled persons' non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The framework for allowing this to happen was provided by a grant scheme in which NGOs were invited to propose their own programs envisioning independence and social inclusion of PWDs.

When designing this granting scheme, politicians followed the spirit of NPG principles and acted primarily as facilitators and the evokers of joint responsibility. Civil servants who took over the task of nurturing implementation partnerships and fulfilled this task by giving NGOs substantial discretion in managing service provision. Using trust as an important management mechanism, civil servants limited formal control to reports in which associations reported their expenditures, outputs and progress in the achievement of results.

In order to foster establishment of shared values the public managers even abandoned strict regulatory practices and produced voluntary quality standards that, among others, emphasized accessibility and appropriateness of service, cooperation and networking of providers, encouraged a holistic approach to problem-solving and service delivery, and stressed the importance of enhancing users' engagement in service provision. To achieve the later, the beneficiary of personal assistance was allowed to autonomously decide on the content of the service to be delivered while respecting integrity and rights of his/her assistant. In that way users became real experiential experts, and the service developed into an exemplary case of co-production.

This was possible only due to fact that during 2000s persons with disability had developed an organizational structure which has transformed from merely service provision to become advocates of the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, international organisations such are UNDP, Word Bank and EU often acted as promoters and supervisors of the reforms. Their approval was important for the HDZ's overall political strategy which was 'devoted' to modernization through a "Europeanisation" process (Petek, 2011).

How is Co-production Managed: Case Study from Thailand

The Croatia case studies are revealing in showing both how co-production can arise through top-down or bottom-up efforts, how each type is susceptible to manipulation, success or failure, and how understanding these policy tools and outcomes requires a firm grasp of both administrative and managerial theory and concepts. How co-production can be used and managers approach it is the subject of the second set of case studies presented below on the emergence of coproduction for elderly care services in Thailand. This case study is revealing of the merits of incorporating insights from policy studies into administrative and managerial thinking it show how co-production activity in this area is less political then Croatia and more of a rational policy choice for an aging society where the government needs to rely more on third sector and citizens to provide services. The design of this policy – who to take charge of what, funding, coordination, scope of activities, outputs and outcomes – is structured in a hybrid fashion that mixes between relying on hierarchical and horizontal network relations simultaneously. A mix of instruments between volunteerism, local government regulation, and market-based activities is used to incentivise actors to participate and help achieve the goals of the policy. Thus in analysing such a case the concept of co-production must be analysed through both the lens of public policy (i.e. as an instrument) and public management and administration (i.e. as part of a service delivery chain or a network structure).

In 2014 the Thai government issued a new policy to tackle the country's rapidly aging population problem. The policy is meant to empower able elderly citizens to meaningfully contribute by providing a variety of public services to fellow elderly people and other citizens. In other words, they are to co-produce elderly care services.

Using the aging population data for the first time, the Thai government has explicitly inserted the concept of co-production in the National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2012-2017 by stating that social welfare for elderly Thais are to be provided *jointly* by their families and the community at large. This is in addition to the stand alone 2nd National Plan for Elderlies for 2002-2021, which focuses on the management of social security funds for elderlies and cash entitlements for individuals who are above 60 years old.

Based on the broad goals stated in the national development plan, the government issued a three-year Strategic Elderly Policy for 2014-17. The policy aims for every province in Thailand to set up elderly care services that is co-produced by the elders. These centres have elderly clubs as members. As of 2014 many municipalities and sub-districts in 12 pilot provinces (out of 77) have their own elderly clubs; each of them has between 300-500 members.

Elders who are capable are often selected to head different sub-committees to run projects. They are to take part in committees that run elderly care centres in collaboration with the local government, the provincial health office, other public agencies, interested private organizations, and non-profits. The local government has the mandate to sign off on the constitution of the committee that runs the centre and the national government provide the funding needed to build the centre and run some projects. Centres are highly encouraged to find additional funding and to generate revenues from their own activities.

These projects range from cooking, sewing, weaving, music classes to demonstration farming, drawing and other types of activities suitable for the age group. Some activities are

for elderlies to learn such as computer usage. Some are for them to teach other age groups such as making traditional sweets. Some of the projects are conducted outside the centre such as visiting other elderly homes, and helping abandoned elderlies. There are also managerial activities for the centre such as maintaining membership database and the local elderly population database.

Ubol Rachatani province's experience provides a good embedded case study to elaborate the specific of these co-production arrangements, its results, and implications. In this province, as elsewhere in the country, elderly clubs act as the dynamic cells of the vast network of elderly care available in the province. In Ubol Rachatani province, anyone can start an elderly club if they have more than 30 members. These clubs are formally registered with the local government. As of 2012, there were 2,816 elderly clubs, making this number the highest among all the provinces in Thailand. Based on interviews, the large number does not mean that all clubs are active. But the clubs that are very active are able to generate other public values. For example one elderly club started another club called 'grassroots club', which worked on preservation of local arts and culture, and conservation of the environment.

In Ubol Rachatani province the elderly centre and elderly clubs are quite active. Using the network approach, the municipalities involved foster collaboration between the local government and the related provincial departments such as the mental health department, the social and human security department, the disease control department, together with community level public health volunteers, local hospitals, village heads, the elderly clubs and other community groups with the elderly centre acting as the central node for each jurisdiction. In addition, Ubol Rachatani province also encourages all municipalities and sub-districts to collaborate with the private sector where possible.

The services available to seniors in this programme are the result of the above policy in addition to other closely related programs that existed before. They run many programs that

rely on volunteers, who are themselves elderly, to give services to others. For example a 65 year old might be assigned to visit a 90 year old on a weekly basis or a capable 70 year-old woman might teach other women how to cook traditional dishes. Other activities include nutritional talks, basic exercise regimes, and cultural celebrations. These volunteers are not paid. Citizens who participate gain by feeling valuable that they are doing something for others and the community, as a whole, gains as well. Like most co-production efforts of this kind this means using altruistic volunteerism to incentivize co-produced service delivery.

Some market-mechanisms are also used however. At the same time there are programs that generate profit for the co-producers. For example some groups are able to sell products from their cooking and weaving classes and the local government is mandated to help brand and market these products. For a number of elderly persons this is a source of supplementary income. The Last House Project is another example of co-production that relies on the market. The elderly must pay about 200,000 baht (about $5,900 USD) for a house built on land that is provided by the government. Once the elderly does not need the house any more it then will belong to the government. Many families save money by building such a house and government also saves money in the long run, because they can provide these houses to others for a lower cost after the initial use. Volunteer groups make rounds in these houses to provide basic health and sanitation care. Aside from feeling relaxed to be in their homes, the cost to the government from this service is much lower than if a citizen was to enter a privately run seniors home.

And in addition to relying on altruistic volunteers and market-based incentives, there is another program, initiated by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security that began in 2005, which uses hierarchical control via contracts with paid volunteers in each village. Five volunteers from the community are trained in each sub-district to specifically take care of elderly persons who do not have relatives and live alone. These volunteers are

often the same people who already served as paid volunteers of the Ministry of Health involved in other programs.[3] Many of the members of the elderly club, who are healthy and active, are also health volunteers for the community. These volunteers help patients in the community to connect to doctors, do regular basic check ups, provide training to raise awareness on health issues for the community. They co-produce the health services with doctors and nurses, who are professionals based in hospitals. Some of them, with many years of experience, become health quasi-professionals. This approach relies on hierarchical control as the Ministry of Health provides clear performance indicators for the local government, the collaborating hospitals, and the community-based health volunteers. Reports must be made to the Ministry at all levels to illustrate results and challenges in the chain of service delivery. While the Ministry standardizes the accountability system, the communities have freewill to organize the health volunteer group, as they like. Some community's setup hierarchical structures to manage volunteers with superiors and subordinates, some keep the relationship informal and work as equal friends.

The implication of this phenomenon is twofold. First, the same group of people is trained and is strongly empowered through this kind of joint co-production. Second, via this process some citizens shift to become quasi-professionals over the medium to long-term, enhancing local human and social capital.

Not all aspects of these co-production arrangements are top-down. Most strong clubs have members that are retired bureaucrats. These persons continue to have connects in government at all levels spreading many departments. Interviews reveal that these clubs often write good proposals for local projects and can easily obtain seed funding from various government agencies, including the local government. Interviews with local government officials and the active elderlies reveal the same sentiment, that there are many details in the

guidelines to ask for funding. Those who know the bureaucratic system well have an easier time of successfully completing application forms and processes.

Local and national politicians also know that seniors proportionally, are the largest group of voters in many rural constituencies. Young adults and working adults mostly stay in big cities like Bangkok, Phuket, and Chiang Mai. Based on interviews we find that the elderly clubs do grow to be politically influential. First, they are seen to be able to influence members to support certain political parties or policies. Second, the stronger clubs, which are mostly in urban areas, are asked to 'coach' smaller clubs in rural areas, including transferring preferences for policy choices and political party affiliations. In some clubs, where members or leaders have direct connection to political parties, the club could become, in effect, informal party branches. Based on comparing two clubs, one in an urban setting and one in a rural setting, in the latter, club members mostly meet to exchange basic information on community events and happenings such as deaths and marriages. Some do not have activities that create further public value, unlike the clubs in the urban settings.

Overall, this policy in Ubol Rachatani has been fairly successful. Based on interviews with health officials, it appears many senior are provided with adequate information to prevent many illnesses. And in turn, elderlies who are volunteers feel useful and respected by others. Doctors, nurses, and local government officials can focus their work on other important issues. In addition, interviews reveal that the additional income that some receive also helps the elderlies. Lastly, the elderly volunteers become very resourceful people for the community in other aspects. For example, when there was a flood in 2013, these volunteers knew exactly which households needed help and the kind of help they needed. Many interviewees agreed that the community as a whole had become stronger and closer as a result of this co-production.

6. Conclusion: Merging Public Administration, Management and Public Policy Theories

These case studies of co-production efforts in the social sector in Croatia and Thailand are revealing of the strengths of approaching policy instrument studies through an interdisciplinary lens. The analysis has shown how knowledge of NPM and NPG thinking helps explain the context for the three co-production initiatives detailed here. But it also shows how taking a policy perspective on the nature of the actors and interactions involved in policy-making and policy implementation help explain the success, and failure, of these initiatives, especially with respect to their political components and links to senior governments and partisan aims and ambitions.

Co-production is a complex policy tool which has mostly been trumpeted in normative policy tool discussions for its potential strength to act as an amplifier of interaction and knowledge-sharing throughout the policy process, as well as serve as insurance of more legitimate governmental action (Klijn, Van Buuren, Edelenbos, 2012). However, these normative arguments do not withstand carefully cross-disciplinary analysis which reveal the need to be cautious about both NPM and NPG's potential to blur accountability, alleviate inequality and divisiveness in the policy process, enable local elite and partisan domination of deliberations, which can lead to distrust of and disrespect for public officials rather than overcome them. (Eikenberry, 2007; Christensen and Laegreid, 2012; Lynn, 2012; Rouban; 1999).

Although NPM brought new more management-centered focus into study and practice of public administration it did not abandon focus on regulatory and oversight functions and reliance on central steering. NPG brought change toward interactive horizontal management with reliance on trust and joint values as central management mechanisms. But as Croatian case of care for elderly showed, in a context marked with politicized policy-making and

politically week target groups/beneficiaries of the policy, some core ideas behind NPG can be perverted and positive social capital can turn into negative.

This paper has thus illustrated the usefulness of using both public policy and public management and administrative lenses to describe and analyse co-production, viewed as a policy instrument and a way to organize a service delivery chain. The cases show that in order to fully explain the results and implications of co-production, it is useful to see co-production as a policy instrument and to examine both the administrative context and the managerial approaches taken to service delivery using this tool.

Endnotes

[1] This has led to such concepts as 'co-management' and 'co-governance' in addition to the older designation of 'co-production' (Osborne 2006; Poocharoen and Ting 2013; Pestoff et al 2009).

[2] The exception was the period between 2000 and 2003 during which Social Democractic Party-led coalition of four parties initiated harmonisation with Western public management practices.

[3] The reason there are so many clubs in this province is because the president of the Provincial Elderly Committee happened to be a retired official from the Ministry of Health. In Thailand, the Ministry of Health has successfully for over 30 years trained health volunteers in every village. Thus via theses health volunteers the idea of elderly care and elderly clubs spread rapidly in the province. Had the president come from the private sector or other sectors, the convergence of health and elderly network would probably not happen.

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