CHAPTER 1

User and Community Co-production of Public Services and Outcomes—A Map of the Current State of Play

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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook has been designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the field of user and community co-production of public services and publicly desired outcomes, which in recent years has become one of the most rapidly growing areas of study in public administration and policy.

As the reader will note, this intention immediately indicates that the Handbook is NOT about co-production between organisations, although websites such as Wikipedia give much space to film and television ‘co-production’ by major media companies. Throughout this Handbook we will refer to such inter-organisational arrangements for joint working as ‘collaboration’ or ‘partnership’, not as ‘co-production’. We have asked all the authors to keep to this convention, so this is the general approach taken in all chapters (although here and there some hint of ‘inter-organisational’ joint working may have entered, undetected, into the discussion of ‘co-production’).

We have been delighted that so many distinguished researchers in the field have contributed chapters to the Handbook and we want to express our debt and gratitude to them. In this chapter, we will set out the overall framework

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adopted in the Handbook and we will summarise the contributions of each chapter to the key issues and debates in the field.

**Structure of the Handbook**

The Handbook consists of ten sections:

- **Introduction and definitions of co-production**—containing this chapter, setting all the other chapters in context, plus Chapter 2, which discusses definitions, locates co-production within the framework of public value creation and unpacks co-production into the ‘Four Co’s’.
- **Disciplinary roots of co-production**—containing chapters on approaches to co-production from the disciplines of political science, political economy and behavioural science.
- **Different perspectives on co-production**—containing chapters on approaches to co-production from the perspectives of co-creation, social innovation, branding, asset-based community development, public law, behaviour change and third sector studies.
- **Co-commissioning public services and outcomes**—containing chapters on micro-scale co-commissioning (the personalisation agenda), strategic approaches to co-commissioning and participatory budgeting.
- **Co-design of public services and outcomes**—containing chapters on co-design of health care with patients, co-design of public spaces with local communities, co-design of neighbourhood-level social improvement and innovation and the quality of co-design.
- **Co-delivery of public services and outcomes**—containing chapters on the range of approaches to co-delivery (with case studies) and co-production to encourage and support desistance.
- **Co-assessment of public services and outcomes**—containing chapters on co-assessment through digital technologies, and co-assessment by citizens and service users in audit, inspection and scrutiny.
- **Implementing and scaling co-production in public service organisations and systems**—containing chapters on leadership for co-production, skilling and motivating staff for co-production, citizens’ motivations for co-production, co-production and vulnerable citizens, and risk and resilience management in co-production.
- **Governance of co-production**—containing chapters on governance implications of co-production: a public values perspective on ICT-based co-production, dealing with governance dilemmas in co-production, and dealing with conflicts in co-production.
- **Future research agenda**—containing chapters on experimental methods for researching co-production, using qualitative and mixed methods in co-production research, co-producing research with service users and communities, and developing a research agenda for evidence-based co-production, building on the research recommendations from other chapters in the Handbook.
Almost all chapters discuss both theoretical and empirical sides of the issue which they consider. Moreover, most chapters present evidence on the level and/or the results of co-production in practice.

In the sections which follow, we pick out some of the most important arguments in each of the chapters and highlight some commonalities and differences of viewpoint. Where some of the arguments in a chapter are especially novel or have special significance for other chapters in the Handbook we provide rather more detail in order to flag up these aspects.

**Definitions**

After this introductory chapter, Loeffler and Bovaird in Chapter 2 review the wide range of definitions which have emerged in the literature since the 1980s and which are evidenced in the different chapters of this Handbook. They highlight that these definitions generally have a common core, containing elements of both citizen action and citizen voice. From this analysis, they develop a definition of co-production and show how it can play a key role in creating public value by improving publicly desired outcomes, making public services more cost-effective, strengthening whole-system resilience and supporting achievement of public governance principles. They then discuss the Four Co’s model which unpacks the concept of co-production into its four modes—co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery and co-assessment. This in turn leads to a five-step change management model for operationalising the move to more cost-effective co-production. A key message from this chapter is that definitions depend on the purpose to which they are put, so that it is not sensible to seek to impose a single definition on the field, and that public service organisations should consider carefully which definition suits them (rather than simply taking one ‘off the shelf’).

**Disciplinary Roots of Co-production**

In this section, there are contributions on the analysis of co-production from the standpoints of political science, economics and behavioural psychology. These analyses highlight how much sharing of theoretical models has occurred over the decades between these disciplines. This is, of course, partly because the study of co-production as a practice is located in public administration and public policy, which are intrinsically multidisciplinary areas.

Nevertheless, some strong differences remain between these disciplinary approaches, so a theme which emerges clearly from this section is the continuing need for co-production to be analysed and understood from a multidisciplinary perspective. In Chapter 3, Jeff Brudney, one of the pioneers in the development of the co-production concept, provides a fascinating insight into its origins in the US literature of political science and public administration in the late 1970s and early 1980s, noting how it garnered interest and momentum through the 1980s but then declined, only to be reinvigorated by
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worldwide scholarship in the mid-2000s. He then traces how, from the mid-
2000s, scholars expanded the concept to a wider range of ‘regular producers’
and ‘consumer producers’ and to more phases of the service cycle, well beyond
the original 1980s interest in service delivery, in a trajectory that has been far
from linear—indeed, as he concludes: ‘Sometimes the wrong train can take us
to the right place’.

Brudney’s discussion of the Bloomington School highlights how a model
which was originally economic (‘regular’ and ‘consumer’ producers, analysed
through indifference curve and budget lines) evolved into a public governance
model (featuring ‘multiple public and private actors, groups and organiza-
tions at different levels involved in multiple stages of the service cycle’). He
reminds us that the Bloomington School of Political Economy evolved from
the Ostrom’s Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, and from the
outset was multidisciplinary. Yet orthodox economics was very slow to absorb
the lessons from this rapidly growing corpus of academic work. Even when
NPM sought to inject a strong dose of market economics into public adminis-
tration later in the 1980s, economists neglected the economic insights already
emerging from the co-production literature—as many economists working in
public management and public policy subsequently continued to do. Does this
mean that co-production simply cannot be accommodated within economic
analysis?

Peter Jackson demonstrates that this is not the case. Starting from the
public economics analysis of individual and collective welfare maximisation
through individual choice and public goods, he highlights how this ‘washes
out’ all consideration of strategic agents, particularly active consumers. He
then conceptualises collective co-production ‘as an arrangement which arises
from voluntary cooperation, with individuals acting privately and voluntarily
as citizens to contribute to services that have been provided collectively’—
a significant departure from the standard (Samuelson/Musgrave) neoclassical
welfare economics, which sharply distinguished public and private goods.

Jackson suggests collective co-production is based on the norm of reci-
procity—cooperating now with someone who will reciprocate in the future.
However, this requires long-term relationships and relational contracts which
are tacit and implicit (quite different from the tight specifications character-
ising most public service contracts between organisations). These conditions
imply that long-run, stable collective co-production is likely to be associated
with small and homogenous groups rather than large and diverse groups.

Jackson creatively takes further the original diagrammatic analysis of the
Bloomington School, analysing how consumers can complement public service
offers with their own resources in order to create their own personalised expe-
rience and value, and, in so doing, minimise the allocative inefficiencies created
by the fixed ‘public good’ nature of public services. Far from being outside the
realm of economic analysis, individual and collective co-production can there-
fore be clearly explained using the same tools which micro-economists have
used for over a century to pretend that consumers and producers are entirely separate.

Jackson finally points out that vulnerable consumers may be less able to engage directly in value co-creation, so co-production has distributional consequences and could even be seen as giving ‘government a licence to dump on users whilst claiming improvements in effectiveness’.

However, there is another dimension to the attack on the traditional narrow economic analysis of public service decision-making. Tinna Nielsen’s behavioural psychology approach in Chapter 5 focuses on how co-production makes people feel included, that they have a voice, are listened to, and believe their insights and perspectives matter. Differently from political science and economics, her analysis assumes the human mind does not operate in a purely ‘rational’ manner—rather, most behaviour is controlled by the unconscious, instinctive, emotional and associative part of the brain. However, those very mental shortcuts (heuristics), whereby people make judgements and decisions quickly and efficiently, also lead to cognitive biases, so that there is a large gap between explicit intentions and actual behaviour, which can partly be addressed through co-production practices. Unfortunately, these cognitive biases can also partly undermine co-production, since the diversity of perspectives, knowledge and insights which people bring into co-production is not always used, leading Nielsen to recommend active involvement of multiple stakeholders with diverse perspectives, with a ‘change maker’ as facilitator of the co-production process, empowering as many people as possible to co-design new inclusive solutions together. This aligns closely with the recommendations of Jeff Brudney in his chapter.

At the same time, Nielsen acknowledges that rationality does indeed play a role—for example, it can help co-production facilitators to design ‘inclusion nudges’—non-intrusive behavioural interventions to influence the unconscious mind to act more inclusively, change perceptions, and mitigate unconscious bias and stereotypes. However, in a final challenge to the ‘rational model’ of public policy, she concludes optimistically that successful co-production may happen without conscious, willing, and effortful contributions, and ‘the people it’s about’ have something to contribute, even though they might not know it.

**Different Perspectives on Co-production**

The next section contains a set of perspectives on co-production which derive from a range of academic standpoints. Some, such as public law, could be considered academic disciplines in themselves, some are branches of management (e.g. co-creation, branding) or social policy (social innovation, asset-based community development, behaviour change) while a final chapter takes a third sector perspective on co-production.
A number of these chapters trace the evolution of the concept of ‘co-production’ from its origin within the ‘political economy’ strand of public administration in the 1970s, through New Public Management (NPM) to the various public governance and public value schools which emerged in the 1990s. Each chapter has a different take on how the concept of co-production mutated subtly in its journey through these different schools of thought and also on the most appropriate school within which to embed it currently.

Some strong commonalities link these chapters—particularly the emphasis we have already noted on the importance of understanding how multiple stakeholders interact and how citizens, as the least formally organised of these stakeholders, and therefore often the least obviously powerful, can nevertheless exert influence, either through their voice or their actions. Each perspective throws light on a different set of mechanisms by which citizens can make their contributions—but also different barriers to such co-production being effective.

At the same time, there are distinctive differences between authors in this section on issues such as:

- **Should co-production be purely voluntary or can it also be made compulsory?**  
  Most authors appear to side with ‘voluntary’, although Evers and Ewert hint that often ‘the co-productive role of service users is mainly enforced through new forms of compliance’. However, the chapter by Bertelli and Cannas is distinctively different here. They discuss the concept of ‘administrative citizenship’, in which the relationship between local public administration and citizens is grounded in a set of rights and obligations that can both permit but also require citizens’ active involvement in the governance and provision of public services.

- **Should co-production be top-down or bottom-up?**  
  Although Strokosch and Osborne suggest that, within several public service reform narratives, co-production is simply employed as a management tool giving power to professional staff over public service users, there is general agreement in this section that top-down approaches to co-production are not sufficient. Klijn and Stevens argue that public managers who are organising co-production for branding have to change their view of their roles from being simply top-down bureaucrats to becoming facilitators of stakeholder inclusion. (Similarly, in a later chapter, Phinney and Sandfort highlight how in their project the tireless work of core team members and external facilitators ultimately could not destabilise the top-down hierarchical structure and culture viewing the ‘citizen as consumer’, so that the project failed.)

- **Should co-production be ‘inside-out’ or ‘outside-in’?**  
  In Chapter 2, Loeffler and Bovaird distinguish the co-production approach of ‘bringing the citizens into what public service organisations are already doing’ (what they call ‘inside-out’ co-production) from ‘public service organisations going out to citizens to support what citizens are doing’ (‘outside-in’
Few chapters address this choice specifically. Russell is the main exception here—he stresses that Asset-Based Community Development should always start with helpers identifying what residents can do for themselves (‘done by’), then looking at what they can do with some outside help (‘done with’) and only finally what citizens want outside actors to do for them (‘done for’). Otherwise, in this section, this approach is mentioned only by Evers and Ewert (although it is mentioned again in a later section, where Torfing and colleagues illustrate how co-design of new and better solutions can ‘bring politics out to people’ and ‘bring people into politics’). It is interesting, that, as we write, the huge worldwide social movement through which citizens are helping to slow the spread and mitigate the effects of Covid-19 is not only receiving media attention but also being praised by governments (see https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1273950/Robert-Jenrick-three-million-volunteers-coronavirus-crisis-latest)—it may be that this will serve as a wake-up call to public service organisations across the world about the level of underused citizen capabilities (and citizens’ willingness to put these capabilities to good social use), if only public service organisations come out of their offices and hospitals to engage with citizens in making their daily lives better.

**What should be the role of politicians in co-production?** In this section only Chapter 8 by Klijn and Stevens refers to this, highlighting that marketing campaigns connected with co-production might interfere with the image or actions of politicians. However, chapters in subsequent sections also deal with the role of politicians. Later, Phinney and Sandfort in Chapter 11 suggest that elected politicians may experiment with the formation of new platforms and arenas enabling the co-design of policy solutions. Torfing and colleagues in Chapter 18 discuss how co-design of new and better solutions can enhance political support and build trust, at least if the politicians are responsive to the needs, wants and ideas of the population and deliver on jointly formulated solutions. Moore and Evans in Chapter 19 point out the lack of research on the role of politics in co-design, although they suggest that getting support from politicians has often been a major stumbling block, as co-design challenges how policy is currently made. However, politicians generally do not figure strongly in this Handbook.

**How can we model the impacts of co-production within complex adaptive systems or a world of ‘wicked problems’?** Most authors discuss both short- and long-term impacts of co-production and suggest that both need to be measured. Indeed, those authors who place special weight on the transformative potential of co-production tend to emphasise that its long-term impacts can be quite different from those in the short-term. However, only Evers and Ewart in Chapter 7 of this section, discussing ‘democratic experimentalism’, Gazley in Chapter 12, Coaffee and colleagues in Chapter 28 and Durose and colleagues in Chapter 35 pick
up the point made by Loeffler and Bovaird in Chapter 2 that clarity of long-term impacts will be difficult to operationalize when we are operating in the complex knowledge domain.

One theme which recurs across several sections of this Handbook makes its first appearance here—namely whether co-production can bring about fully transformative change in society and in citizens’ experiences or whether it is generally only instrumental in its effects. In this section, Strokosch and Osborne suggest that, viewed from the perspective of ‘public service logic’, with its holistic understanding of the role of co-production in public service delivery and the creation/destruction of value for public service users, co-production has the potential for transformative change. In later sections, a similar line is taken by a number of other authors. However, it is noticeable that not many examples of ‘transformation’ of outcomes are presented in these chapters—important exceptions include the case of an established co-production research network in a mental health hospital in London (Robert and colleagues), peer mentoring for desistence in the UK (McCulloch), the Waterproofing Data project for flood resilience in Brazil (Coaffee and colleagues), the Medical Co-op hospitals in Japan (Pestoff) and digital networks through which citizens can help the police solve crime (Nieuwenhuizen and Meijer).

Turning to the individual chapters in this section, Kirsty Strokosch and Stephen Osborne in Chapter 6 provide a detailed and nuanced account of the evolution of the concept of co-production within four narratives of public service reform: New Public Management (NPM), Public Value (PV), New Public Service (NPS) and New Public Governance (NPG). They go on to argue for locating co-production within the Public Service Logic (PSL) framework, identifying five domains of value that can be created/destroyed through public service delivery: short-term satisfaction and mood, longer-term effects and impacts (outcomes), whole life experience, capacity creation and public value. They suggest that this more holistic conceptualisation differentiates between two intrinsic processes of participation (co-experience and co-construction), which are an inalienable part of public service delivery, and two extrinsic processes (co-production and co-design), in which the parties to public service delivery can choose whether or not to engage. They suggest four implications of PSL for co-production—first, the need for effective management of service encounters; second, the key role of relationship building between service staff and service users; third, the need for public service staff to develop skills around value creation; and finally, the need to recognize that value can be destroyed as well as created through the delivery (and co-production) of public services.

In Chapter 7, Adalbert Evers and Benjamin Ewert argue there is a tension between co-production as it should be and actual co-production practice in most social service systems, where key co-production values, such as democracy, personal rights, respect and empowerment are not promoted—indeed,
permanent economic pressure and managerialism, have largely dehumanised such systems, so co-production by service users is mainly enforced through new forms of compliance. Consequently, many traditions, routines and policy changes in social services undermine co-production’s democratic and social ambition, so that confidence in co-production becoming mainstream appears rather naïve. Nevertheless, they see co-production as indispensable to governing pluralist societies whose members demand service quality and participation, rather than accepting ‘command and control’ management which assumes their contributions are ‘free at the point of use’. (Here there is clearly overlap with the intrinsic processes which are an ‘inalienable’ element of service delivery, discussed by Strokosch and Osborne.) Finally, they argue that, if co-production is to become a powerful vehicle for democratising social services, it should be framed as a form of social innovation, interacting with politics, at the fringes of civil society and public systems, below the radar of policy makers and administrators (what Loeffler and Bovaird in Chapter 2 label as ‘outside-in’ approaches to co-production). They advocate action in localities as a key arena for co-productive innovations, with pilot programmes linking policy making at central levels and local action, in order to promote ‘democratic experimentalism’ and allow more public debates, participation and collaborative ways of interaction.

In Chapter 8, Erik-Hans Klijn and Vidar Stevens consider the key role that citizens can play in co-producing and communicating effective ‘brands’, which are being used more frequently in the public sphere to change perceptions on problems, to attract actors to policy solutions and to communicate policies, products and places to a wider public—a trend which has largely been ignored by public administration scholars up to now. They argue that brands rely more on visual images acting on emotions and trying to entice people, instead of using words, argumentation and regulation—this connects to the analysis of behaviour change by Nielsen in Chapter 5. Since emotions are often seen, by practitioners as well as academics, as distorting deliberation processes, their role has been systematically downplayed, so the branding literature offers new perspectives for governance theories. Klijn and Stevens discuss three forms of co-production in branding: citizens as brand communicators (creating word-of-mouth), citizens as brand adaptors and citizens as brand initiators (where citizens create the brand together and also co-produce the brand communication strategy). They conclude with some ‘to do’ strategies for co-production with citizens in branding: first, build trust relations between citizens and the brand initiator; second, try to achieve learning processes in which new ideas are generated and third, provide active nurturing to ensure that co-production in branding emerges and is managed.

In Chapter 9, Cormac Russell explores an asset-based community development (ABCD) perspective on co-production. He argues that such approaches are primarily concerned with citizenship enhancement and precipitating deeper associational life. ABCD is about people living in local places taking responsibility for each other and their local resources, growing collective efficacy
and supporting people to move from being defined as ‘service-users’ to being valued as, treated as and feeling like independent citizens. It involves paying attention to what is in a local place (the ‘abundance’ perspective), not what outsiders think should be there or what they think is absent (the ‘scarcity’ perspective). Russell argues that ABCD demands radical humility from public service agencies and that ‘authentic’ co-production accelerates when prefaced by citizen-to-citizen co-creation and community building, growing more out of the collective agency of citizens than from organisational agency, since a professional can never know what a citizen needs until the citizen first knows what assets they have.

Finally, Russell argues that, while there are certain things that cannot be done either by citizens or by professionals working alone, and which therefore lend themselves to co-production, many other things, particularly community-building efforts, are best done by citizens in their own right, and on their own collective terms and so do not require co-production, or any other service-based response.

In Chapter 10, Tony Bertelli and Silvia Cannas take a very provocative public law perspective on co-production to identify and clarify the characteristics of situations or activities which, from a legal point of view, permit co-production. They argue that the legal case for this is straightforward for direct beneficiaries of co-production and reasonably clearcut also in common law systems (e.g. the US and UK)—but more difficult in other traditions.

They suggest a new model of ‘administrative citizenship’ relating citizens to local public administration, grounded in a set of rights and obligations that can both permit and require citizens’ active involvement in the governance and provision of public services, on an equal footing with public managers, so that a citizen becomes entitled to co-produce, together with the public administration, the services from which (s)he and any proximate citizens benefit. Moreover, Bertelli and Cannas argue that co-production can be non-voluntary, compelled by mandatory legal provisions—in this they concur with the conclusion of Brandsen and Honingh (2016, 432) that ‘It is possible to coerce citizens to co-produce, even if doing so is counterintuitive’. Imposing compulsory co-production activity upon an administrative citizen is justified where the proximate individual’s participation in the co-production activity is essential to proper service functioning, and for the pursuit of the community’s ‘public interest’. However, they advise flexibility, since embedding co-production too strictly within a legal framework could diminish its effectiveness. They finally warn, first, that holding co-producers legally liable for externalities from co-production could undermine compliance and, second, that implementation mechanisms need to be different in each country.

In Chapter 11, Robin Phinney and Jodi Sandfort address the relationship between co-production and collaborative governance, investigating how differing conceptions of citizen roles become solidified in management practices. How do public organisations move to viewing the citizen as co-equal in developing and implementing government programmes, rather than as a
customer? What factors enable and constrain this change and what organisational change tools might help this significant shift to take place?

They demonstrate these issues through a case study of a place-based initiative designed to promote citizen engagement and collaboration to alleviate poverty. Though staff conceptually were committed to engaging citizens as partners in developing and implementing policy, the tireless work by some core team members and external facilitators was ultimately not sufficient to destabilise the top-down hierarchical structure, given the absence of commitment and willingness to change on the part of senior management. Phinney and Sandfort conclude, however, that the initiative, although it ultimately failed, threw up a set of tools and resources that may help public organisations elsewhere to achieve greater engagement and citizen responsiveness.

In Chapter 12, Beth Gazley explores why co-production, for all its recent popularity, has received so little attention in third sector theory or research. She argues that the non-profit sector’s innately ‘hybrid’ or ‘porous’ nature offers many opportunities for the third sector to engage in co-production. She considers the major theoretical frameworks justifying this—in particular, Salamon’s ‘three failures theory’ (offering strong parallels with Jackson’s analysis in Chapter 4) and Young’s ‘three lenses’. She suggests that giving non-profits a strong role in organising co-production can be seen as offering a more trustworthy and professionalised partner to government, assuring service quality. However, sometimes this may have the downside that a nonprofit ‘partner’ may be subject to less public scrutiny and accountability—and could undermine the ideal of bringing citizens closer to government. Moreover, government tends to attempt (and often succeeds in) co-opting third sector organisations to serve its interests rather than those of service users. Furthermore, citizen-volunteers as co-producers may do more harm than good without effective governmental controls or when lacking appropriate competences. She concludes that successful public service provision may require not three sectors but four, where the fourth sector is the fluid non-institutionalised world of citizens, in their roles as families, households and informal communities.

Co-commissioning of Public Services and Outcomes

In this section of the Handbook, there are three chapters on different aspects of co-commissioning, which cover micro-scale co-commissioning (the personalisation agenda), strategic approaches to co-commissioning and participatory budgeting. These chapters demonstrate the potential for co-commissioning—but also some of its difficulties. The move to individualised funding has occurred in several countries and has been one of the main approaches to micro-co-commissioning. In the UK it has been embedded within a wider ‘personalisation agenda’ but, as Musekiwa and Needham report, the battle to extend it to a large proportion of those eligible has been hard and slow and there is still a long way to go before it becomes standard (and
smooth) practice. At the macro-level, Ongaro, Mititelu and Sancino situate commissioning within the broader process of ‘place-shaping’, as an ‘overarching strategic framework’ defining the community services required. They see co-commissioning as integral to strategically managed approaches to co-production and, consequently, the role of political astuteness is fundamental, in order to lead for public value in a context where different publics can have either similar or competing values. Operating at both macro and meso levels, participatory budgeting is one way in which many governments through the world, at national and local levels, have sought to bring citizens into the commissioning process but, as Escobar highlights in Chapter 15, these efforts have often had only partial success.

In Chapter 13, Editor Musekiwa and Catherine Needham explore co-commissioning at the micro-level, namely through personalised budgets in health and social care, most often for people with disabilities and age-related frailty, but also for people with chronic health conditions. Personalisation has been seen as potentially transformative, enabling previously marginalised and disempowered people to make decisions about their care, as co-commissioners, working with professionals to make care decisions. However, still only a small proportion of service users actually have personal budgets, partly because, after a decade of local government spending cuts, current service users have high levels of need and frailty, which may inhibit their scope to co-commission care.

Musekiwa and Needham conclude that the dynamics of power, balancing professional and user control, operate differently between the social care and health care sectors—in practice, co-production has encountered more barriers in health than in other public services, because of the role of the medical profession as holders of expert knowledge. However, their accounts of the experiences of personal health budgetholders give reason for optimism that health professionals can learn during the co-commissioning process and become more willing to share some control.

In Chapter 14, Edoardo Ongaro, Cristina Mititelu and Alessandro Sancino present a strategic management approach to co-commissioning public services. They situate commissioning within the broader process of ‘place-shaping’, as an ‘overarching strategic framework’ defining the community services required, but they agree with Loeffler and Bovaird (2019, 242) that ‘public outcomes are not only achieved through commissioned public services but also directly through co-production with service users and local communities and behaviour change on the part of citizens’. They argue that co-commissioning is integral to strategically managed approaches to co-production and the strategic plan for co-commissioning requires an open place-based platform for learning which can provide a bridge for collaborating organisations, individuals and communities wishing to learn. They therefore stress the need for organisational commissioners to adopt a strategic approach—this leaves open, of course, how commissioners, wishing their own strategies to be successful, can find ways also to influence the strategies of service users and communities.
Finally, Oliver Escobar in Chapter 15 outlines how participatory budgeting (PB), seen as a democratic innovation where citizens participate directly in making collective decisions on public spending, has been adopted in thousands of localities around the world, exemplifying how co-production can generate public value through collaboration between professionals and citizens across communities of place, practice, identity and interest. He argues that PB, as a highly diverse form of co-production at the interface of public service reform, democratic innovation and social justice, is arguably the most widespread and shape-shifting democratic innovation of the last three decades. Its global spread has been enabled by its malleability, which allowed adaptation worldwide following disparate logics and with varied levels of impact.

However, he also shows how PB has often been depoliticised, reducing its transformative potential and turning it into a ‘technical’ tool, although commissioning, with its inherent prioritisation processes, is a political process and therefore should accommodate ‘productive contestation’, as well as collaboration. Escobar concludes by inviting all interested readers to follow up his chapter by experimenting with, and learning from, democratic innovations like PB, and ends with the clarion call: ‘We need traditional institutions to be better and new institutions to be different. At stake is nothing less than setting the foundations for the governance of the future’.

**Co-design of Public Services and Outcomes**

This section of the Handbook contains four chapters, covering co-design of health care with patients, co-design of public spaces with local communities, co-design of neighbourhood-level social improvement and innovation and the quality of co-design. The chapters locate the roots of co-design in a range of disciplines and professional practices and highlight how ‘co-design’ is regarded by many people and organisations as a key aspect of their practice, even if they do not necessarily identify their work as part of a wider ‘co-production’ approach—indeed, as Robert and colleagues point out, ‘co-design’ is sometimes seen as a quite separate approach from co-production.

Nevertheless, these four chapters demonstrate that co-design is already a thriving activity in many parts of the public domain. However, full evaluations are available for only a few of these exercises—the chapter by Robert and colleagues is especially enlightening on what has been evaluated already and what remains to be covered.

Two themes recur in several of these chapters—one is the need for creativity in co-design, as it essentially presupposes that what is currently being done is inappropriate or insufficient. Torfing and colleagues suggest that ‘swarm creativity’ is key to new solutions bringing better quality, while Remesar’s methodology for citizen engagement in public art and other place-based ‘remembrance’ projects involves creative procedures for training and preparing citizen participants. Moreover, Robert and colleagues argue for the appropriate use of creative and ideational methods—and complain that the healthcare metrics often used in project evaluation can hinder this.
Second, all the chapters in this section (and particular the chapter by Moore and Evans) refer to the role of politics and politicians—in strong contrast to much of the rest of the book, where, as highlighted earlier, politicians get relatively few mentions. While it is to be expected that sections on co-delivery and implementation of co-production, which both happen out of the ‘line of sight’ of most politicians, might not significantly feature them, it is rather surprising that they do not feature more, at the very least in the sections on co-commissioning and the governance of co-production.

Turning to the individual chapters, in Chapter 16 Glenn Robert, Sara Donetto and Oli Williams explore the origins and evolution of co-design practices within design thinking. Building on the holistic perspective of service design, and methods from a wide range of disciplines (e.g. ethnography, information science and interaction design), Experience-Based Co-Design (EBCD) focuses on both the lived experiences of patients, carers and healthcare staff and also the process of patients, carers and staff working together to co-design improvements, and has now been implemented internationally. They characterise contemporary EBCD projects as largely small-scale changes to existing services, relatively easy to observe and typically measured through narrow metrics. Evaluations have been positive but there remains the need for rigorous evaluation of clinical and service outcomes of EBCD, as well as cost-effectiveness. In contrast, transformative co-production, although still rare, could lead to more significant public service reform but remains relatively unstudied.

Finally, they suggest that seeing co-design as simply a subcategory of co-production obscures the relevance of the additive-transformative distinction to co-design work but that the Four Co’s conceptualisation of co-production (Loeffler and Bovaird 2016) allows for consideration of the potential impact of approaches like EBCD on the democratisation of design. They finish by acknowledging the unhelpfulness of the phenomenon of ‘cobiquity’ (a conflation of the various ‘co’ words associated with participatory design) but strongly advocate ‘recognising in equal measure the unique – and importantly radical - features and potential of both co-design and co-production’.

In Chapter 17, Antoni Remesar outlines how the POLIS Research Centre has worked in Barcelona neighbourhoods for over 20 years, developing an interdisciplinary approach to public participation in urban regeneration through urban design and public art. He emphasises the importance of creativity in devising and implementing strategies for citizen participation, in conformity with the affirmation in the Universal Declaration of Emerging Human Rights of citizens’ right to participation in public decisions on matters that concern them. Remesar shows how his team worked in two social innovation projects with ‘organised neighbours’ and the local administration, harnessing citizen participation in workshops, civic forums, exhibitions, talks, demonstrations, walks, etc., starting from a key neighbourhood issue identified by residents themselves.
He warns that co-production can be sabotaged both by conflicts (e.g. with local authority projects) and by delaying tactics or changes of mind by key organisational actors—a reflection that aligns with the discussion of co-production in a complex adaptive system in Chapter 36. He concludes by highlighting that co-production may not work properly where there is a fundamental asymmetry of power between actors and agents. Moreover, co-design often has to be complemented by co-commissioning and co-delivery, if frustrations and negative reactions by citizens are to be avoided.

In Chapter 18, Jacob Torfing, Elizabeth Toft Kristjansen and Eva Sorensen present a theoretical framework which draws a conceptual distinction between the ‘co-production’ of more or less predefined public services and the ‘co-creation’ of more or less innovative public value outcomes, both within public organisations but also at the neighbourhood level, where it is initiated and orchestrated by social entrepreneurs and civil society organisations.

However, they suggest that research investigating co-creation in local neighbourhoods remains in its infancy. They therefore examine how political leaders in both public and non-profit sectors may enhance input and output legitimacy by involving local citizens in co-creation of solutions that promote local well-being. They illustrate how co-design of new and better solutions can enhance ‘input legitimacy’ by helping to ‘bring politics out to people’ and ‘bringing people into politics’, while also enhancing political support and building trust, at least if the politicians are responsive to the needs, wants and ideas of the population and deliver on jointly formulated solutions. Further, ‘output legitimacy’ is increased where the new solutions exhibit better quality and effectively solve current problems as a result of ‘swarm creativity’. Their case study highlights a platform which enhances the political leadership in the community and also promotes new forms of participatory and deliberative democracy in order to build trust and create joint ownership of innovative solutions.

Finally, Nicole Moore and Mark Evans argue that low quality or tokenistic co-design can ultimately generate citizen cynicism and undermine public trust. They highlight six principles of engagement, as an evidence-based model for assessing the quality and impact of co-production processes. However, they suggest that in practice there is still little shared understanding, particularly in government, of how best to work with citizens to change decision-making and implementation. Specifically, they highlight lack of political support as a major stumbling block, together with the ‘rational problem solving’ of the policy elite, largely made up of ‘econocrats’ or legally trained people (echoing Nielsen’s analysis in Chapter 5). They suggest inviting politicians onto project governance boards (or even becoming project participants), developing models to demonstrate potential savings, developing politically salient measures of success and using narratives and storytelling to demonstrate the public value of co-design.
More generally, Moore and Evans point to lack of effective communication about good quality co-design practice between disciplines and sectors, limiting opportunities for shared learning and effective development of theory and practice. Nevertheless, they conclude that design thinking provides a unique opportunity for a community of practice in citizen-centric governance, so co-design develops not only better policymaking but also political literacy, confidence and ambition in the citizenry, and is therefore a key measure of the quality of democratic life.

**Co-delivery of Public Services and Outcomes**

The co-delivery section of the Handbook contains a chapter on co-delivery, presenting a framework of co-delivery approaches and a series of case studies (Elke Loeffler) and a further chapter on co-production as an approach to encourage and support desistance (Trish McCulloch).

The key message from this section of the Handbook is that ‘citizen action’ is an important component of co-production, although many authors give more prominence to ‘citizen voice’ (in terms of co-commissioning, co-design and co-assessment).

In Chapter 20, Elke Loeffler presents a framework of co-delivery approaches and a series of case studies. The typology in her framework distinguishes six approaches to co-delivery—co-implementation of projects, co-management of public facilities, contributing to peer support, co-influencing behaviour change, taking joint action to improve public services, and taking joint action to improve outcomes. Loeffler’s round-up of the range of co-delivery approaches around the world in Chapter 20 shows an extraordinary variety and many of these approaches are already replicated in many other contexts. She concludes—using recent experiences of Covid-19 as an example but also making the point more generally—that citizens have resources, assets, strengths and capabilities relevant to making a significant difference to the outcomes achieved in modern societies. Moreover, they are often very willing to use these capabilities for positive social and public purposes, including the co-delivery of public services. However, the public service system in most countries is generally still not designed, organised, incentivised or experienced in making use of the rich potential of citizen contributions to co-delivery.

In Chapter 21, Trish McCulloch explores a key aspect of co-delivery, the role of peer support in co-production of desistance. She argues that the place of co-production in criminal justice systems can appear particularly problematic, since in neoliberal cultures of control offenders are usually seen simply as objects upon which justice is done. However, desistance from crime can be seen as a potential trajectory for an offender, through interpersonal and social relationships, including co-production relationships with professionals.

The desistance approach focuses on strengths and goals rather than risks and needs, and privileges relationships over treatment, extending beyond
the traditional worker–client relationship to enabling and repairing relationships with family, peers, employers, communities, civic society and state, so that co-production is central. McCulloch distinguishes peer mentoring, mutual aid and self-help groups (including social cooperatives) and user-led communities/organisations as three broad and overlapping modes of peer support which each involve, at least potentially, co-productive activities. She argues that peer support can disrupt and transform existing social and public service systems and relationships. She concludes (‘with optimism and caution’) that there is particular value in user-led, group and collective forms of co-production of desistance, reflecting a critical questioning of the reliance within public services and systems (and research) on traditional levers for change, which are rarely transformative.

Co-assessment of Public Services and Outcomes

The public administration and public management literature of the past four decades has been characterised by frequent calls for evaluation of public policy. It is therefore not surprising that many of the authors in this Handbook strongly advocate the assessment of different aspects of co-production (its level, its process, the composition of its participants, its outputs, its outcomes, its conformance to governance principles, etc.) Moreover, many of them suggest co-assessment through the joint activity of public service organisations and citizens, whether service users or members of the community. Few authors give much detail on how this can be done (with the partial exceptions of Chapters 34 and 35). However, the two chapters in this section explicitly explore co-assessment—in Chapter 22, Ben Clark’s analysis focuses mainly on co-assessment through digital technologies, while Dave Mckenna in Chapter 23 mainly explores how audit, inspection and scrutiny by councillors and citizens can improve the quality of local governance and strengthen democracy.

Clark’s analysis demonstrates the power of collective co-assessment through digital media by people who are contributing quite separately, indeed largely without awareness of each other, and doing so with relatively little effort—what might be styled ‘co-assessment from the cloud’. Even those citizens in Clark’s category ‘more active’ generally only require to make a small and quick input. McKenna, on the other hand, is largely analysing co-assessment procedures focused on individual contributions which are personal and usually important to the citizen concerned—indeed, they sometimes require considerable effort (even courage), given that the service user or community member may place themselves in the spotlight through their contribution.

Both Clark and Mckenna agree that public services, as well as citizens, need to interpret and act upon the information gathered in co-assessment exercises—as Clark says: ‘Data alone does not make for better decision making or change behaviours – and the crowd, left to its own devices, can produce both good and bad results’, so the technology needs to be guided and harnessed for
public purposes. Mckenna highlights that, while assessment is nominally done ‘in the public interest’, in practice the primary line of accountability for public service organisations is to political and organisational leaders, while for citizens and service users it is to their community organisations, their fellow citizens or themselves, so these different lines of accountability may pose a barrier to effective joint working and results which are valuable for both parties.

In Chapter 22, Ben Clark highlights that the level of involvement by citizens in ICT-enabled co-assessment varies—his case studies range from ‘less-active’ to ‘moderately active’ to ‘more active’ co-assessment. Even at the less active end of the scale, however, some commitment is required from participants to share time, effort, computing power, and information with the co-production electronic platform. Clark suggests that advanced ICT-enabled co-production can focus more on collective assessments by the crowd, compared to the more traditional co-assessment approaches which focus on the individual. Small pieces of information from a large number of people allow governments to map problems over a wider area and longer time period than before. Moreover, ICT can create online co-production communities that support public services. Clark concludes that co-assessment through technological means has tremendous potential to shape society and provide better services and that future technological advances are likely to enable new and different kinds of co-production that we cannot even imagine today.

In Chapter 23, Dave Mckenna distinguishes co-assessment from the many examples of citizen engagement in audit, inspection and scrutiny of public services, which tend to be top-down consultation, and argues that these functions need more of the radical collaboration which characterises co-production. He constructs a ‘wheel of co-assessment’, showing how co-assessment might be applied through five stages of co-focussing, co-directing, co-detecting, co-judging and co-effecting. He distinguishes three main types of benefits that co-assessment might potentially achieve: instrumental (helping co-assessors to achieve their aims better), democratising (promoting openness, representation of the public interest, ensuring the voice of consumers is heard, helping citizens to understand better how government works, fostering legitimacy and trust in government) and relational (encouraging greater civic-mindedness and social capital in the citizenry and helping professionals to work more responsively, constructively and accountably). In each stage, citizens need support to ensure the technical quality of their inputs while not overburdening them or losing their ‘voluntary and spontaneous’ participation. His discussion highlights the problem that benefits of co-assessment (even when done digitally), often accrue to the public service organisations involved, rather than the citizens personally.
Implementing and Scaling Co-production in Public Service Organisations and Systems

This section of the Handbook contains five chapters on different aspects of the management of co-production—leadership for co-production, skilling and motivating staff for co-production, promoting citizens’ motivations for co-production, ensuring that co-production makes a difference for vulnerable citizens, and using co-production to develop equitable resilience outcomes in high-risk contexts.

Key themes which emerge from this section include:

- **getting in place the necessary skills for co-production**—skills are emphasised by most authors in this Handbook but they differ on what skills are most important. In an earlier section, staff skills were emphasised by Strokosch and Osborne (to understand and facilitate value creation). Here, other staff skills are also highlighted—by Schlappa and colleagues (skilled negotiators, influencers, ‘navigators’), by Tuurnas (segmenting, communication and enabling skills, plus skills in using ICT, new systems and databases) and by Brandsen (skills in supporting vulnerable people). Citizen skills, on the other hand, are emphasised by Steen (knowledge about the service at hand, having expertise in the field, having a clear understanding of and being able to process substantive information about the public service concerned, social skills) and by Brandsen (peer support skills for vulnerable people), as they were earlier by Moore and Evans in the co-design section (political literacy). On the citizen side, the authors of these chapters make little distinction between skills needed by service users as co-producers and those needed by other members of the community who are helping to co-produce—nor those skills needed by politicians to promote co-production. This would seem an area which deserves further research;

- **managing complex and multilayered relationships** (Schlappa and colleagues), which requires an individualized and differentiated approach to co-production for different people and groups, rather than a single, standardised process (Brandsen);

- **recognising the need for reciprocal relationships** (Schlappa and colleagues), with the associated requirement that training for staff should focus on interactive skills in complex situations of dispersed power, often crossing boundaries of professional and non-professional expertise where roles have to be constantly negotiated (Tuurnas);

- **appreciating the powerful effects of empathy in relationships** with service users and citizens, requiring understanding of the entirety of a person’s life beyond their direct problems (Turnas; Schlappa and colleagues);

- **understanding that leadership and power dynamics in co-production have to be negotiated and are emergent**, given their inherent uncertainty and fluidity (Schlappa and colleagues);
• understanding that the traditional power relationship between researcher and researched should be more equitable in co-production, with each recognising the contribution of the other—in practice this also is a negotiated, and fluid process, balancing a range of concerns and compromises (Coaffee and colleagues)—also see the final section of the Handbook;
• seeing learning by doing as crucial in co-production, through experiments with different approaches to co-production and through networking with each other, acting as ‘critical friends’ (Tuurnas; Coaffee and colleagues);
• recognising the negative effects of fear—staff fear of losing their jobs (Tuurnas) and citizens’ fear that a move to co-production and resilience may simply mask government’s reneging on difficult responsibilities by delegating them to other stakeholders (Coaffee and colleagues);
• needing public strategies to make co-production easier and to provide incentives (Steen);
• assuring the democratic quality of service provision and protecting public values such as citizen empowerment, inclusion, equity and equal access to service delivery—ensuring fair inputs and fair distribution of benefits (Steen) and recognising that vulnerable and marginalised people will need particular support (Brandsen)—(connecting to governance of co-production in next section);
• recognising community interests as key motivators for citizens, including civic duty, a feeling of being responsible for the well-being of others, a sense of satisfaction from contributing to a worthwhile cause and doing something for the community (Steen), (connecting to Jackson’s discussion of citizen ‘preferences’ in Chapter 4);
• deciding whether governments should use sanctions to encourage reluctant co-producers, given that many authors explicitly define co-production as requiring voluntary activity by citizens (Steen);
• organising so that policymakers and professionals go out to meet citizens, not just the other way round (Brandsen), echoing the call in Chapter 2 for ‘outside-in’ co-production;
• recognising that transformative change is possible through the co-production of resilience (Coaffee and colleagues) …
• … but accepting it is a fantasy that everyone can be mobilised in co-production (Brandsen).

Turning to the individual chapters in this section, in Chapter 24, Hans Schlappa, Yasmin Imani and Tatsuya Nishino ask ‘who is in the lead?’ during co-production. They argue that public leadership research has largely remained grounded in hierarchical and heroic leadership perspectives but that a relational leadership perspective is more pertinent, in which leadership is increasingly recognised as a social, collective and relational phenomenon, with no individual or group in full control, given that public service contexts are characterised by complex and reciprocal relationships between managers, professionals and service users. They suggest that power is not static but
negotiated, dynamic and emergent, shifting between professional and citizen co-producers according to their expertise, knowledge, resources and position.

They then develop a model which integrates relational leadership variables with individual, group and societal levels of co-production and the co-production cycle (co-commissioning, co-design, co-delivery, co-assessment). The examples they give of the operation of the ‘Four Co’s’ demonstrate that the question of ‘who is in the lead?’ is answered differently in each ‘Co’ and in different services. Finally, they suggest that relational leadership requires professionals to be skilled negotiators, able to influence formal and positional power and to build relationships through ‘shared goals, trust and empathy’, as well as navigating through environments with dispersed power configurations.

This leads neatly to a discussion in Chapter 25 by Sanna Tuurnas on skilling and motivating staff for co-production. She highlights that co-production is not necessarily easy for staff, who may fear losing power over decisions, or even their jobs, or may simply lack understanding or experience of what is involved in co-production. Of course, public service personnel are a very heterogeneous group and work at various levels. Frontline staff often are more in touch with the operational reality of co-production, while senior managers and commissioners may often look at co-production more through a ‘systems’ than a ‘people’ lens. Again, the attitude to co-production may differ between staff working in public, private or third sector organisations. Successful co-production may require crossing and transforming boundaries—allowing, and indeed even inviting, citizens to enter the traditional professional domains of public service workers can be a fundamental change in the identity of these staff. Tuurnas makes three specific hands-on suggestions for training staff in how to be successful as co-producer—first, interaction training, then understanding and demonstrating empathy and, thirdly, learning by doing, as learning occurs through co-production experiments.

Turning to motivations of citizens to co-produce, in Chapter 26 Trui Steen argues that government strategies and incentives may be needed, especially to overcome inequalities, but this requires understanding of citizens’ specific motivations. Ensuring fair inputs in co-production and fair distribution of benefits is key to assuring the democratic quality of service provision, protecting public values such as citizen empowerment, inclusion, equity and equal access to service delivery.

Steen also suggests that low self-efficacy may lead to inequitable effects through self-selection, holding people back from participating or selection biases on the part of public services. She warns of the ‘Matthew effect’ (‘the rich get richer, the poor get poorer’), also discussed by Taco Brandsen in Chapter 27, if co-production by vulnerable citizens is not encouraged. She also argues that social capital can either constrain or indeed support citizens’ engagement in co-production. Finally, she explores whether coercive sanctions encourage citizens to act and are ‘fair’, since everyone is expected
to contribute, or, on the contrary, discourage co-production by demoralising people, crowding-out intrinsic motivation and cooperation and causing perverse or opportunistic behaviour.

In Chapter 27, Taco Brandsen picks up a concern expressed by many other authors in the Handbook—namely, will co-production lead to a greater inclusion of vulnerable people? He highlights that for decades government attempts at engaging citizens in participation have consistently been biased against vulnerable and marginalised people, favouring those already well-represented in traditional democratic institutions.

He admits that, empirically, we still know fairly little about how co-production actually affects vulnerable people. However, extrapolating from traditional types of participation, he is cautiously optimistic, in that he finds co-production could indeed make a difference, lowering the threshold for participation, particularly where it takes an individualised and differentiated approach for different people and groups. He suggests that policymakers and professionals should preferably go out to meet citizens, not the other way round, echoing the call by Loeffler and Bovaird in Chapter 2 for ‘outside-in’ co-production. Moreover, digital communication tools could help some people to co-produce who are less mobile, although they are not for everyone (and digitalisation could indeed leave some vulnerable people worse off). Finally, he warns against the fantasy that everyone can be mobilised and suggests we should think of co-production not as a single approach, but as a family of methods.

In Chapter 28, Jon Coaffée, Joao Porto De Albuquerque and Vangelis Pitidis propose resilience as an approach to managing complexity, in which co-production is a key process. They see co-production as about developing equitable resilience outcomes through a process of shared dialogue between different stakeholders, including local communities. However, they warn that government resilience policy and practice can fail to ensure protection of the population during crisis, delegating this to other stakeholders (a suggestion later reiterated by Steve Smith in Chapter 31, especially where resilient co-production systems have been undermined by austerity). Coaffée and colleagues argue that it is therefore important to ensure that marginalised voices are incorporated in decision-making and the construction of resilient futures. Their Brazilian water management case study shows the potential for transformative change in how flood resilience is viewed and operationalised, partly facilitated through a co-produced research process. However, resilience implementation generally conflicts with bureaucratic values such as efficiency and procedural rationality, which are difficult to balance with adaptability, redundancy and innovation.

They stress that, although the term ‘co-production’ implies a degree of equality in research development, in practice this is a negotiated and fluid process, balancing concerns and compromises, but with the researchers remaining independent and promoting mutual learning, so the traditional
power relationship between researcher and researched is more equitable, recognising each other’s contributions.

**Governance of Co-production**

This section contains chapters on governance implications of co-production, including a public values perspective on ICT-based co-production, dealing with governance dilemmas in co-production, and dealing with conflicts in co-production.

As set out in Chapter 2, there is a set of governance principles which we might expect to be applied to co-production and which co-production might, in turn, help to achieve. In practice, only some of these principles have featured strongly in this Handbook—particularly the equality agenda and fairness/due process. Significantly less attention had been paid to other principles, such as sustainability, transparency and accountability. It is therefore useful that, in this section, Pestoff explores accountability in his case study of the democratic model of healthcare in Japan, where he discusses principles (applied to hospital boards) of ‘one member one vote’, pluralism, representation of different interests and accountability to members. In this way he attempts to answer the challenge set by Gazley in Chapter 12.

This discussion is clearly deserving of more attention. In purely hierarchical governance systems, accountability is essentially top-down; on the other hand, in purely citizen-control contexts we might expect accountability to be essentially bottom-up. However, in public governance contexts, accountability should surely be two-way and this certainly applies to co-production—citizens can hold staff accountable for their part of the co-production bargain and, similarly, staff can discuss how well citizens are playing their part. This can even be formalised in co-production charters (Loeffler 2021), developed and agreed in co-production by both citizens and public service organisations.

Turning to the individual chapters in this section, Victor A. Pestoff in Chapter 29 argues that a participatory administration model should focus on empowering the lower echelons of service providers and their service users, decentralising much of the decision-making to them—this aligns with similar concerns treated in some detail in other sections in the chapters by Nielsen, Evers and Ewart, Musekiwa and Catherine Needham and Steen. Pestoff suggests that this should improve the staff’s work environment, work satisfaction and collaboration with partners, service users and other citizens. Following Ostrom, Pestoff differentiates ‘transformative co-production’, where citizens play an active role in producing public goods and services, from ‘instrumental co-production’ where they are passive service recipients, or their activities are limited to more mundane, sporadic acts contributing to the service delivery process. His findings from a recent staff study in Japanese healthcare, show that different governance models have different impacts on the work environment, work satisfaction and service quality—staff with greater autonomy were more satisfied than those with less autonomy, and this, in turn,
can impact on perceived service quality. He concludes that governance models, rather than ownership of the service provider per se, need closer attention in research on co-production, work environment and service quality in healthcare and other publicly financed services.

In Chapter 30, Wouter Nieuwenhuizen and Albert Meijer take a Public Values perspective on ICT-based co-production, complementing other chapters on ICT approaches to co-production in this Handbook. They suggest that the rise of digital technologies has reinvigorated the promise of co-production to increase legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness both in instrumental ways, e.g. by facilitating information-sharing practices but also in transformative ways, e.g. by ‘co-creation through imagination’ using augmented reality—linking to the debate on transformational co-production raised elsewhere in the Handbook.

Nieuwenhuizen and Meijer argue that the impact of ICT-based co-production on public values is often neglected, especially the values of ‘proper governance’, concerned with lawfulness, equality and integrity. They analyse the promises and risks posed by digital technologies for ‘proper’, ‘performing’ and ‘responsive’ governance and warn that ‘proper’ and ‘responsive’ governance are at significant risk from transformative and substitutive ICT-based co-production, which bring high risks to values such as lawfulness, equality and participation. They conclude, however, that all forms of ICT-based co-production are likely to support ‘performing governance’ (although their study does not include effects upon privacy or the dangers of ‘surveillance capitalism’).

In Chapter 31, Steven Rathgeb Smith highlights how co-production programmes present complicated governance dilemmas, including the ‘dark side’ and dysfunctional implications of co-production, with daunting challenges related to equitable and ongoing citizen and user participation, programme design, appropriate accountability processes and sustainability. In order to rise to these challenges, and achieve the promise held out by co-production, the leadership and staff of co-production programmes need to be well-versed in the complexities of forging collaborative networks among individuals with quite diverse backgrounds and expectations. Moreover, adequate resources are a critical success factor in the development and sustainability of such programmes. Smith argues that prolonged public sector austerity in many countries and the subsequent Covid-19 pandemic crisis have underscored the fragility of co-production programmes, where there is an insufficient safety net support for community members.

In Chapter 32, Anna Scolobig and Louise Gallagher explicitly address conflicts in co-production, a topic which crops up in several other chapters, particularly the chapters by Remesar, Coaffee and colleagues and Durose and colleagues. The chapter focuses on conflicts in decision co-production, which they define as analytical-deliberative procedures for professionals and citizens to make better use of each other’s assets, resources and contributions to achieve better public decision outcomes (following Bovaird and Loeffler
Knowledge co-production processes face difficult trade-offs across social, institutional, economic and ecological value dimensions at multiple scales and some outcomes may be zero-sum (good for one group, but in equal measure bad for another), as well as being difficult to predict in advance. Carefully designed inclusive processes must therefore respect stakeholder value heterogeneity and explicitly address trade-offs and uncertainty. They suggest that co-production is well-suited to problems where consensus is low, uncertainty high and where joint action is needed—it should enable clarification of what conflicts are really about, not necessarily eliminating them but perhaps promoting necessary compromises. They focus on how different methodologies (plural rationality, multi-criteria and scenario-based) can support this. Social media can help, allowing gathering of data on attitudes, views and behaviours. However, co-production is not a ‘magic bullet’ to solve all conflicts—it can even make some worse—and it can slow down decision-making.

**Future Research Agenda**

This section contains chapters on different aspects of the research agenda around co-production—the use of experimental methods, qualitative and mixed methods in co-production research, co-producing research with service users and communities and developing a research agenda for evidence-based co-production, building on the suggestions for further research made in the other chapters of this Handbook.

Key themes which emerge from this section include:

- *experimental methods in research* are a relatively recent development in public administration but they are especially well-suited to probing causal relationships in co-production (Kang and van Ryzin);
- *the most common types of experiment in co-production have been field experiments and survey experiments*, focusing mainly on ‘awareness’ of co-production and ‘willingness’ to co-produce, rather than actual co-production behaviours (Kang and van Ryzin);
- *co-production requires authentic engagement*, necessitating new and equitable relationships between researchers and individuals/patients/end-users and communities (Ramsden and colleagues), especially in qualitative research;
- *many research problems need expertise beyond the academy*—there is growing awareness of how complexity/‘messiness’/wicked problems necessitate interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research (Durose and colleagues);
- *co-production is distinctive in valuing different forms of expertise and recognising knowledge produced through joint action*, respecting the voice of all co-producing stakeholders (Durose and colleagues; Ramsden and colleagues);
co-producing research represents a shift in knowledge production towards research that is heterogeneous, problem-centred, applied, works across traditional boundaries and epistemic communities and with an explicit commitment to change (Durose and colleagues);

co-producing research isn’t about devaluing science, but re-evaluating other ways of knowing (but consequently facing contest from within the academy) (Durose and colleagues);

do-producing research raises questions about voice (whose voice matters?), actions (whose actions matter?) and values (what is the purpose of research?) (Durose and colleagues);

co-produced research is part of a more open and democratic process of knowledge production which opens up the possibility of transformation through shared action (Durose and colleagues)—this links to seeing co-production as being about both citizen voice and citizen action (Chapter 2);

when co-producing research, individuals/patients/end-users and communities need to be involved in all aspects of the research process (Ramsden and colleagues);

while co-production offers a distinctive take on methodology, it does not prescribe particular methods (Durose and colleagues);

co-produced research always takes time, patience, energy and commitment (Ramsden and colleagues);

building capacity in the co-producers of research is key, defined as strengthening people’s ability to determine their own values and priorities and to organise themselves to act on them (Ramsden and colleagues);

co-producing research often raises questions on which researchers are not accustomed to be scrutinised, including distinctive ethical challenges, e.g. on anonymity, confidentiality and intellectual property rights. Researchers therefore must remain reflexive about their own research practice and ethics, as well as recognising that the blurring of boundaries between personal commitments and organisational and professional expectations can be emotionally turbulent and demanding (Durose and colleagues).

Turning to the individual chapters in this section, in Chapter 33, Sinah Kang and Gregg van Ryzin highlight that there remain important causal questions about the causes and effects of co-production, which experimental research is especially suited to answer. The use of experimental methods to study co-production has, however, been a relatively recent trend. Survey experiments have been most common, with large, representative samples but they tend to be artificial and have limited ‘treatment’ options—and tend to test ‘willingness’ to co-produce rather than actual co-production behaviours. Field experiments, also widely used, more often examine actual participation in co-production and have the advantage of involving naturalistic interventions, real-world settings and unobtrusive measures of behaviour. Although not so methodologically rigorous, they often provide the most relevant experimental evidence for public
policy and practice (such as a change in laws or rules, enhanced access to information, or programme rollouts on a selective basis). Kang and van Ryzin identify, surprisingly, that many field experiments have not involved the use of ‘unobtrusive’ outcome measures (recorded for other purposes) but rather self-reported (survey-based) perceptual or behavioural outcomes. They highlight that experimental research on co-production has focused so far on a rather narrow range of issues, which represent only a narrow slice of the public goods and services in which co-production occurs.

In Chapter 34, Vivian Ramsden, Tanya Verrall, Nicole Jacobson and Jackie Crowe-Weisgerber explore the use of qualitative and mixed methods to research co-production. Given its focus on the interaction between professionals and individuals/patients/end-users and communities as ‘experts in their own circumstances’, co-production requires authentic engagement—and this in turn necessitates researchers developing new and equitable relationships with individuals/patients/end-users and communities, who need to be involved in all aspects of the research process. They point out that, worldwide, there are now many terms describing such collaborative research approaches, including co-production, authentic engagement, community-partnered participatory research, participatory research, participatory health research, action research, community-based participatory research and co-design.

They highlight that primary health care, as defined by the WHO, should be universally accessible to all through their full participation (‘co-production’) and how the framework in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2018) was specifically developed for research projects involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples (indigenous peoples) and their communities, so they can shape and co-produce all research that affects them.

They suggest that guiding values in co-produced research need to be initially negotiated and then maintained, including respect for self and others; building trust in relationships; responsibility and accountability of the individuals/patients/end-users and communities; freedom of the individual; kindness and compassion; patience; humility; transparency and inclusiveness.

In Chapter 35, Catherine Durose, Beth Perry and Liz Richardson highlight the need to value the contribution of non-professional researchers, recognising that many research problems need expertise beyond the academy, since complexity/‘messiness’/‘wicked problems’ necessitate interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. Research co-production is a more open and democratic process of knowledge production, enabling transformation through shared action, and ensuring relevance, so universities can demonstrate a greater societal contribution.

Durose, Perry and Richardson describe how, in their own research, they have used design thinking to develop a set of principles, leading to the TERRAPINS heuristic—Transparent, Engaged, Respect, Relational, Asset-based, Positive-sum, Iterative, Not (decided in advance), Self-aware, as a
starting point for the practical design of co-produced research. They highlight methods such as participatory action research, deliberative methods and visual or creative methods as helping to engage those least accustomed to research processes and to disrupt entrenched power dynamics. Although its value remains contested within the academy, co-producing research isn’t about devaluing science, but re-evaluating other ways of knowing and wider skills. Researchers must remain reflexive about the ethics of their own practices and accept the blurring of boundaries between personal commitments and organisational and professional expectations, which can be emotionally turbulent and demanding.

Finally, in Chapter 36 Loeffler and Bovaird discuss how a more evidence-based approach might be taken to co-production. They suggest that a number of characteristics of co-production make it particularly challenging for academic research, including its tendency to be holistic, contextual, multifaceted, bridge-building, creative, dynamic, complex, emergent, behaviour-influencing and tacitly understood. Taken together, these characteristics mean that future research strategies to investigate co-production will need to be rather different from those of the past thirty years. The chapter then summarises key research recommendations from each chapter of the Handbook. This leads to a discussion of how co-production might be evaluated, focusing on assessing not only its impacts on quality-of-life outcomes and public governance principles but also on the whole circular causal chain from inputs to those outcomes and the effect of these outcomes on citizen capabilities. Finally, the chapter explores how this research agenda might be furthered by a more creative approach, incorporating action research and the tapping of tacit knowledge.

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