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Beyond the State: Mobilising and Co-Producing with Communities - Insights for Policy and Practice

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Exploring progressive alternatives

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To speak of governing 'beyond the state' may conjure the loaded language of privatisation and the outsourcing of public services, but this is not the only perspective. The contributions in this pamphlet provide an alternative interpretation, showing how community organising and co-production can shape public policy making and service delivery in new and creative ways.

Community organising has a long and international tradition. It offers a way for communities to recognise their common interests and mobilise to achieve change. Often their target is government, and their desire is to redress disadvantage by actively campaigning for changes in policy and practice. Sometimes this is to overcome the effects of existing policy, but it is also about shaping emerging policy to ensure that affected communities become beneficiaries rather than bearing the costs.

Co-production is becoming an important way of thinking about the active design and delivery of services through collaboration between users and providers. While its origins are in social care and health services, it has much wider applications. But to be effective, it requires ways of redressing the power imbalance between users and producers. Here, community organising can be an important mechanism. The pamphlet presents the voices of community organisers and individuals working on service delivery in the not-for-profits sector, as well as researchers studying these forms of action 'beyond the state'.

The contributions are edited versions of talks given at a series of workshops organised in 2011 and 2012, which brought together academics and practitioners to examine the new politics of civic action outside the formal institutions of elected government and public bureaucracy. We were fortunate to be able to include colleagues from the USA who brought a transatlantic perspective on these issues. Together, the contributions show how community organising and co-production are powerful instruments to open up the policy process, potentially deepening democratic engagement and administrative responsiveness. As such, they offer a challenge to the way in which governing beyond the state sometimes obscures accountability, privileges private interests, or facilitates governments' off-loading of responsibilities to civil society.

In the first part, **Lina Jamoul**, **Liz Richardson**, and **Alejandra Ibañez** articulate a vision of community organising as a means of realising the potential of co-production to include and serve diverse communities through a combination of empowerment and committed advocacy. They show how organising is not exclusively or inevitably opposed to government, but also constructively negotiates with power to define and accomplish shared goals. Case studies from Chicago and London illustrate how organising can start from opposition to state power *over* decisions that affect communities, but also become a developmental exercise that creates local power *to* imagine and work for alternative

futures, leading to a more equitable sharing of power *with* government to co-produce policy and services.

In the second part, **Janet Newman**, **Catherine Needham**, **Chris Sherwood** and **Jess Steele** show how co-production builds on an organised community. The language of co-production is somewhat ambiguous. It is used to denote a range of institutions and practices that encompasses at one extreme a 'dark side' (as Jess Steele puts it) of privatisation and abandonment of public responsibilities, and at the other the 'bright side' through which individuals, communities and governments learn to listen to one another and genuinely to collaborate in mutually beneficial ways to design and realise public policies and services. We again might call this the exercise of power *with*, as communities engage as true partners of the state, a point highlighted by the contrast with much weaker forms of shared choice such as personalisation or voucher schemes.

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Part One: Community organising - mobilising action beyond the state

Community organising has now received cross-party support in the UK. It has been advocated as a means of encouraging communities to feel like they can deliver change and mobilising community action. The Office of Civil Society in the Cabinet Office has supported the recruitment and training of 500 senior community organisers, along with 4500 part-time voluntary organisers over the next four years. Organising is perceived by Locality, the organisation delivering the development programme, as important beyond current policy ambitions and is instead, a crucial part of a process of building a movement for social change.

The current Coalition government is also interested in change, in unsettling the status quo, and sees organising as part of a wider strategy of rolling back the state and shifting responsibilities for the provision of public services. Here our contributors explore whether these ambitions are two sides of the same coin or irreconcilable aims.

The community organising programme in the UK has been translated from established work in the US, popularised by Barack Obama. Organising is often associated with radical tactics of Saul Alinsky, evidenced in his work in the 'back of the yards' area of Chicago. **Lina Jamoul** outlines the use of this approach to organising to ensure social guarantees in the development around the London Olympics.

Alejandra Ibañez's account, challenges the relevance of Alinsky's power-based approach which, despite tangible successes, many others have also criticised as failing to offer a critique and alternative to mainstream politics. Ibañez instead advocates an approach more akin to the 'popular education' approaches associated with Paulo Friere. Friere's approach uses a method of 'critical dialogue' to create awareness of the causes of disadvantage, facilitate reflection and motivate action.



Lina Jamoul

Lina Jamoul is a community organiser and leads Citizens UK's work in east London. She came to this work through a PhD on broad-based community organising in Britain, exploring how US ideas on community organising could be translated to the UK. Here, she reflects on her experiences of gaining a foothold for communities in the Olympic bid process and the employment opportunities that its success created in east London.

<http://www.citizensuk.org/>

It's really about power

I'm from Syria originally, I was born there, my parents were political activists in the late 70s in Syria and my father's a political exile, so politics is very much in my DNA. Seeing the result of what happens when power is so unaccountable, I see my community organising work very much in that tradition. It's really about power.

I have worked for a number of years for the Industrial Areas Foundation, set up by Saul Alinsky in the 1930s, in Chicago and now work for Citizens UK in east London. Citizens UK is a network of broad-based organisations based in geographical neighbourhoods. So in London we have five organisations— East London Citizens, North London Citizens, West London Citizens, Shoreditch Citizens and South London Citizens. Citizens UK operates across the country. There are broad-based citizens organisations in Milton Keynes, Nottingham, Glasgow, Birmingham and Cardiff.

Community organising is quite fashionable at the moment. Barack Obama probably has a lot to do with that. Politicians in the UK became interested in community organising when they saw another politician use the tools of community organising to win an election and become President of the United States. The Labour Party and Movement for Change are looking at ways of integrating community organising into the Labour Party, while the Coalition Government has set up a programme to train community organisers

across the country under the 'Big Society' banner.

Whether it's fashionable, or unfashionable, community organising in the UK has old roots and is steeped in tradition from the Dock strike, the Suffragettes, and the Match Girls strike. It is not a coincidence that the oldest, modern-day community organisation is in east London – TELCO (the East London Communities Organisation) - and that's where I'd like to take you: east London, 2004.

At that time, east London was awash with a lot of PR people that were dispatched from the London Olympics Bid team, headed up by Lord Seb Coe and supported by then Mayor Ken Livingstone, to whip up excitement and do community consultations. TELCO had been building relationships, developing leaders and taking on local issues for a number of years before the Olympics came to town. Founded in 1996 and now part of London Citizens, it has over 65 member organisations in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Waltham Forest, and Redbridge, drawn from across community and faith groups. TELCO had a breadth and depth of reach into the local communities of east London. We organised around local issues: cleaning up a noxious factory in Canning Town, fighting bank branch closures in our

building a movement for social change

an organisation that was truly made up of, and led by, the local people

neighbourhoods, campaigning for police patrols at specific times to make our streets safer, and making Canary Wharf a Living Wage Zone.

With local victories under our belt and an organisation that was truly made up of, and led by, the local people in east London, we were well-placed in 2004 to come up with a list of demands for the London Olympic Bid team. Our demands were that all work during the construction of the Olympic site and the Games were to be set at the London Living Wage; that 30% of jobs created would go to local people (in neighbourhoods with some of the highest rates of unemployment in the country); and that affordable homes in a Community Land Trust model were built on the Olympic Park.

We were less interested in meeting the PR community consultation people, and more interested in meeting with Ken Livingstone and with Seb Coe, who was heading the bid team. At first we couldn't get a meeting with Seb Coe, so we had to run a number of actions in order to be able to sit down with them and say: 'Here are our ethical guarantees. If you want us to support London's bid to host the Olympics, these guarantees must be written into the bid'.

These ethical guarantees were eventually written into the bid after some tussles and negotiations. Some of those negotiations were quite public and involved actions with 500 people, while other negotiations were led by smaller delegations of 10 people. No matter the size, the tone was always polite and respectful – yet firm. On November 9th 2004, two weeks before the London Bid was submitted, a jazz band led a delegation of 150 TELCO leaders along the South Bank to City Hall, and a press conference was convened outside, so the media could cover the 'deal' and then the leaders joined Ken Livingstone and Lord Sebastian Coe as they signed the deal for the 'People's Ethical Guarantees' – assuming London won the bid.

There's a phrase we use in community organising: 'All organising is disorganising and reorganising'.

After London won the bid for the Olympics, we had to pry the doors of London2012 open again by taking action to make sure that they didn't return to 'business as usual'. One of the actions that we took involved the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) that was hosting a large conference with developers. We were outside the conference handing out pieces of cake, saying: 'We want a piece of the cake too!'. As a result, a further round table meeting was held at Canary Wharf with Lord Coe and officials from the new Olympic Delivery Authority. This firmed up TELCO's proposals and eventually led to a meeting and very constructive working relationship with the new head of the ODA, David Higgins.

'All organising is disorganising and reorganising'

So the Olympic Games in London were the world's first Living Wage Games, which is a really big deal for the tens of thousands of workers servicing the Games. The cleaners and catering staff, the retail staff, the lowest paid workers in any operation, will this time round be paid £8.30 an hour. At the time of writing, we are still in negotiations (this time with the London Legacy Development Corporation) on affordable housing and building Community Land Trust homes. The work that we've been involved in more recently has been to ensure that local people have access to the Olympic jobs. During the construction phase of the Olympics, the consensus was that the target for employing local people was not met. We used our leverage to propose and get agreement that the recruitment for Games-time jobs, and there were going to be 40,000 jobs, would be done in the local community. The deal was that the organisers for the Olympic Games would deliver contractors to our member communities, and we would deliver people

looking for work from our churches, mosques, synagogues, schools and colleges.

We've put almost 1300 people in to Olympic Living Wage jobs, outperforming many of the local job brokerages and the publicly funded programmes that help people into work. We were successful because we have relationships in the communities, because our motivation was not profit, because we weren't constrained by narrow criteria that tend to be attached to public money. We did go into service delivery, which is something we hadn't done before – and contrasts to community organising – and we don't know if we will again, but the opportunity was big and urgent in this instance. We've been able to show that a relational approach works when you're trying to get people into employment.

The problems we all face in today's society are multiple and complex. The Government and the market, alone, are unable to deal with the problems of employment, education, housing and community cohesion.

An independent, powerful civil society sector is needed where innovative ideas – like the Living Wage, Community Land Trust housing, community-based job brokerages – can be hatched, developed and pushed for.



Liz Richardson

Liz Richardson, a researcher with an active interest in community organising, reflects on the wider implications of Lina Jamoul's story of organising in east London. She points out that how community organising goes beyond current policy concerns, and is an important expression of individual and collective values. She also highlights how new forms

of mobilisation use both persistence and a sense of humour to convey their messages.

The adoption of the community organising model by the UK's Coalition Government was an interesting move for government. One of the state's policy aims was to sponsor challenges to its own existence, approach and policies. While this makes sense for a government committed to 'rolling back the state', it also presents a set of complex and potentially paradoxical

importance of connecting with people's personal values

situations. Citizens UK operates outside of the government sponsored programme, but in a broader context of political support (from some quarters at least) for a model associated with the well-known radical and writer Saul Alinsky. As Lina Jamoul shows in her contribution, the core idea is to re-negotiate relationships between those in power and established institutions, and those who want to create their own collations of citizen power. That these ideas have found a place in policy, with those with formal power, is an opportunity for anyone committed to social justice and enhancing a wide range of forms of democracy.

Lina Jamoul's powerful account highlights how community organising goes beyond current policy concerns, with its lineage in traditions of broad-based organising. She links her motivations as an adult with her experiences as a child of her family's political exile from Syria. This is a poignant reminder of the importance of connecting with people's personal values as well as

the more serious implications of the neglect or suppression of democratic debate. She offers the example of the high profile work around the Olympics, with all of its associated marketing about how this investment would benefit the people of east London.

Fine words required additional citizen action for institutions to deliver on the intentions of the Olympic committee. Using this example, she demonstrates how just getting access to decision-makers can be a hard-fought process. This contribution describes the experience of Citizens UK in winning, losing, and provisionally re-instating the living wage guarantees. In doing this, there is a key lesson, that citizen action is not always a linear process and that incremental gains can be lost in a moment, regardless of the time and energy they took to win. Citizens need to maintain continued pressure, and demands for accountability from institutions.

citizen action is not always a linear process

And if institutions change their approach, so can community organisations. As she points out, getting involved in service delivery was a strategic and instrumental decision for Citizens UK under very specific circumstances. Rightly, as a self-reflective organisation, they would consider whether to do this again under different circumstances. Underlying this message, there is a useful lesson for the community sector about how a commitment to principles can be retained at the same time as varying the means to achieve ends.

ne enjoyable aspect of this piece is the illustration of how new forms of mobilisation use both persistence, and a sense of irony and humour to convey their messages.

The immediacy and visual power of the action that involved offering pieces of cake (used to demand a fair deal from the investment in the Olympics) are more than a fun campaign mobilisation. It strikes me that this example tells us that lobbying messages need to go beyond bald facts to communicate with the individuals that ultimately constitute the systems and institutions of power.

For many years, there has been a debate about how far high profile projects – like those in the arts or sports – can generate benefits for the communities in which they are based. For all the hype, too often, questions have been raised about whether local communities will see and feel the positive effects of iconic buildings, international attractions, sporting and arts events or facilities. The example of the Olympics involved a national debate about not only the relationship between the city of London and its disadvantaged areas, but its relationship with the rest of the country.

But the lessons for the improvement of living conditions and employment prospects in Lina Jamoul's piece go further than the Olympics. This inspiring story made me reflect on the city centre regeneration of my adopted town of Manchester, and the building of a modern art museum in my home town of Middlesbrough. There are many other examples internationally. There is an alternative to dismissing these projects as unlikely to benefit those in those places who most need opportunities. We can take from Citizens UK's experience that community organising, through its relational approach, has the potential to integrate and deliver ethical guarantees into large-scale investments. In this, we move towards the bigger goal of transforming relationships of power.



Alejandra Ibañez

Too often, attempts to encourage citizens to get involved in their community have been 'invited' formal spaces, where the agenda has been set by government, where citizens are often co-opted and where participation becomes, as Sherry Arnstein recognised, an 'empty ritual'. Alejandra Ibañez's approach to organising in Chicago was

able to mobilise some of the most so-called 'hard to reach' people in society, immigrant women, some without US citizenship. Ibañez was able to do this through drawing on shared experiences, as immigrant women, and using peñas, informal cultural gatherings to build community and as a vehicle for civic engagement, political awareness and action. Pilsen Alliance also focused on education as a means of mobilising the community, recognising that sustained action is built through a focus on issues that people most deeply care about.

<http://www.thepilsenalliance.org/>

we had to go back into agitation and organising to be able to move forward

We started to do more formal organising and partnered with an organisation called The Applied Research Centre. They helped us create our framework to talk about the impact, the racial inequity, and the disinvestment in the rail line in our community. We threatened the City of Chicago, the Mayor and all fifty council members that we were going to file a class action lawsuit against them because they could not make a commitment to maintain our rail line, even though we had brought in the federal dollars. Within 24 hours of us leaking to a local alderman that we were going to file a class action lawsuit, everything changed and the city's budget that was being passed that month for the whole year included the return of 24 hour rail service to the community. I thought that was a really hard lesson that we've learned, that we had to re-commit to doing the agitation, the confrontational organising to make progress.

I'm going to do a little story telling about what an organised community looks like, at least in a Chicago, American perspective - how we engage community and what are the challenges. The Pilsen Alliance is a relatively young organisation, located in the Pilsen community of Chicago which is a historical point of entry for immigrants. It started with a predominantly Czech and German community, but for the last sixty years it's been predominantly Mexican, it is now third generation Mexican; but you still see a number of immigrants who have just arrived. This is a community that has been historically disinvested and abandoned. You see some of the poorest housing in Chicago, you see dilapidated schools.

In the late 1990s, the City of Chicago [the city government] talked about shutting down the only rail service that served this neighbourhood. There were a number of local activists who felt that we had lost a community organising capacity and Pilsen Alliance was created in response to that. The Alliance was lead agency of the Blue Line Transit Taskforce that fought a

successful 7-year battle to restore night and weekend rail service on the Douglas Branch of the Blue Line. We collaborated very closely with local neighbourhood organising agencies and actually succeeded in getting near 50 million dollars from the Federal Government to be able to maintain the rail line and upgrade it.

When I joined Pilsen Alliance those dollars had already been won. We were working in collaboration with the city authorities. The Chicago Transit Authority and the City of Chicago had made commitments to creating union jobs because we had brought all those federal dollars to upgrade the rail line, but the unions just refused to hire locally. They actually ended up only hiring sixteen local residents. It was quite pathetic for a city that has this history of organising that we weren't able to get any significant number of local residents employed. I felt like we had been co-opted, and after about a year we came out of the partnership with the city government because we were going nowhere. In fact, we had to go back into agitation and organising to be able to move forward.

As somebody who was not formally trained in the Alinsky tactics, I really had a lot of criticisms of that approach. I think the tactics were really powerful but I felt that there was no race analysis, there is no gender analysis, there is no class analysis and as an immigrant who worked in an integrated community, I felt like there were many missing pieces. And so we took what we thought were the best tactics of Alinsky but then also started to use a lot of popular education approaches. We started to develop our own curriculum that was culturally relevant and had a race/ class/ gender and even immigrant analysis to it.

The majority of our constituency were women - Mexican women and immigrant women - and Alinsky just didn't do enough for us. The tactics at times were very useful, but we felt they didn't come from a point of love, versus a point of agitation and frustration, which does exist; but for us if we really loved our community and wanted a better community then we really had to respect our constituency and engage them in true analysis. And we did that through

creating a popular education curriculum so we could talk about where they were today, how they got where they were and for them to understand that their experience was just as powerful, if not more powerful, than academic definitions – they lived gentrification, they lived inequity every single day.

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And so for us, community organising was to build a power base of community residents to be able to create accountability and opportunities for full engagement. That still meant agitation was necessary, but it meant building community power.

Every two years we would have a community congress - a community assembly. You didn't have to be a citizen to attend - our community was about 70% non-citizens, foreign-born - and we would use those full day assemblies to talk about the issues that impacted the community and we would come up with the strategies and the priorities for that year.

it meant building community power

We reached out to the public [state] schools... and the one school that said: 'Yes, we're interested', we worked with them and helped facilitate a parent leadership team. They called themselves 'Parents Committed to Change' or 'Parents Seeking Answers, not Evasiveness'. In Spanish this is even longer! We came in there and created a curriculum, 'What's Community Organising 101'. We started to create this popular education training. Academics helped us define what property taxes are, what's gentrification, and then we would translate, trans-adapt it, to make sense for people. I'll tell you it was really hard to turn academic language and definitions into definitions for lay people and

then also turn that into something accessible and Spanish. Many times the words didn't even exist. Gentrification does not exist in Spanish so we actually had to explain that in English and then translate it into Spanish. I think I was an interpreter for many years.

And then we used a lot of culturally relevant activities. We would do peñas which are used a lot in Latin America, they're used a lot in Chile, which is where I'm from. During the 1970s, during the military dictatorship, families would use peñas which were informal house parties - you would go to somebody's house and you'd play the guitar and play popular music, music of resistance, and while you did that and your kids were running around and you ate, you would talk about politics of the society and you would organise underground mobilisations. And so we used that concept because our community residents weren't going to come out for a debate about politicians, but they were going to come out to see their kids perform, play music and then we would use popular theatre and different approaches to talk about politics.

We used culturally relevant approaches and vehicles to get people engaged and then always infused politics.

So it was never very direct in your face, it was very indirect.

We used culturally relevant approaches and vehicles to get people engaged and then always infused politics

Even though we knew that taking public dollars would tie our hands, we decided to go ahead and give it a second try and become a community school partner. There are 700 public schools in Chicago, 120 of those public schools have community school partners. They are non-profit partners that provide wrap-around services for families and we felt that because our community was being displaced with gentrification that we needed a solid space to organise, so we became the broker of services. We received a significant amount of money so that we could broker English as a second

language, social work support, different kinds of domestic violence support, to broker those services at the school, as we did 'Community Organising 101'. We actually even created a woman's co-op within the school, and the mother group that we helped create had a thirty-day boycott to fight for a library.

And so really we used those public dollars to help facilitate our organising in a very specific place, which became very difficult to do in a community that was very transient. And so it provides many opportunities, but it also provided many challenges. We always feared that 'you never bite the hand that feeds you', and we were constantly challenging the City of Chicago. We put ourselves in that position but we were willing to do it so we could provide the social services for our families and also give ourselves a leg-up in being able to organise.

As Alejandra Ibañez's account demonstrates, organising is not about filling a vacuum left by a retreating state and providing public services, though at times it may be strategic to do so. Whilst organising requires a re-negotiation of power and re-distribution of resources, it also demands an active state. This leads us to re-think ideas of 'third party government', to be less a 'delegation' of responsibility from the state and more as a 'negotiation' with it, with the state empowering citizens but not abandoning them. Listening to stories such as that told by Alejandra Ibañez offers us inspiring insights on how to enact community demands and in doing so foster new democratic potentialities and enhancing responsiveness.

Part Two: Co-production - involving citizens in government beyond the state



Co-production offers a form of 'governance beyond the state' by opening up policy and service delivery to greater influence by citizens. By securing the active involvement of citizens it can also secure more effective policy outcomes. And, of course, it is attractive to ministers seeking to find alternatives to state-provided services by fostering more active, responsible forms of citizenship. As such it is a form of governance that has attracted a great deal of policy attention in recent years, especially under the Coalition government.

This makes it a very slippery concept and set of practices. Co-production can mean many different things, from involving service users in treatment decisions to community groups taking over public assets; from a greater recognition of citizen capacities and expertise to the requirement that citizens take responsibility for their own care and welfare; from the expansion of democratic deliberation to the abandonment of a wider public sphere of political judgement. There is, then, an ambiguity about how far co-production is a progressive development that opens out the political process, or how far it is complicit with state retrenchment and the abandonment of citizens to a reliance on their own capacities and resources.

But these are not, of course, 'either/or' questions. The political landscape has for too long been subject to oscillations between a wild optimism and a disenchanted disaffection. Optimists have promoted a succession of new models and methods, from 'partnership working' to 'digital era governance', from 'personalisation' to 'co-production', as ways of promoting progressive ideals and of finding better solutions to social problems. Critics, meanwhile, have suggested that such methods simply bind citizens into new forms of governmental power, or serve as a smokescreen behind which more neoliberal government strategies can be pursued. By highlighting ambiguities I want to suggest that more attention might be paid to the specificities of power, relationships and authority in particular places and cases.



Chris Sherwood

Chris Sherwood brings a perspective to the discussion of co-production drawing on his experience of working in the disability charity Scope. He points out that co-production is about working in a different way with people – facilitating with, rather than delivering. But to realise this vision we need to overcome current barriers by

encouraging creative approaches by staff, taking account of volunteer effort in measuring the benefits, and developing outcome-based commissioning.

<http://www.scope.org.uk/>

leaders to endorse and adopt the approach. Secondly, co-production isn't a panacea to the challenges that public services face

It's suitable in certain circumstances in public services but it is not suitable for all types of services and we need to be realistic about that. Co-production is most suited to relational based services such as family support or health and social care and that's the perspective I come from.

Co-production for me is about how you engage and develop relationships with communities.

It's about working alongside and working with communities rather than doing to or for them.

Co-production is a real powerful catalyst of change

- that's certainly something I've seen at Scope where people have seen working in a co-produced way as a really powerful

SCOPE delivers £65 million worth of commissioned services on behalf of the public sector, and local government in particular. I have been leading a review of our service offer, which has focused on how we can better embed co-production in our service models, and I am here to share some reflections on that today. I also want to talk about why co-production is not more widely seen in public services.

First of all, co-production isn't new. We might give it a glossy name, but it's a

co-production is often hidden

practice that has been around in public services for a long time. However we know much co-production is often hidden.

Co-produced services often look different from the conventional ways of delivering services, which can create challenges in persuading commissioners and senior

co-production isn't a panacea to the challenges that public services face

catalyst for change for themselves. Co-production is about shifting power from professionals so that services exercise choice and control over what services they use and how they use them.

A full co-production model might not work for everybody or in every service. People might just want to access services in a light-touch way and might not want to be part of a peer support group for instance. But that doesn't mean that we can't work in a co-produced way when we deliver support. Co-production is about working in a different way with people – facilitating with rather than delivering to or for.

It's about working alongside and working with communities rather than doing to or for them.

Co-production is a real powerful catalyst of change

The area of real interest for me is how co-production can build the resilience and capabilities of individuals and ultimately reduce the demand for services; this is a really interesting area to explore further.

I just want to talk very briefly about why co-production hasn't spread more widely in public services. There are three key barriers to co-production. The first is staff culture, and challenging that culture of 'the professional knows best'. When we reward people for filling out pieces of paper, and we tell them how to work in a particular way, that doesn't support co-production. Co-production should place real emphasis on creative approaches to delivering support.

Secondly, it's about how we measure services and how we account for value. I've seen examples where co-production might cost a bit more for one commissioner but deliver big savings elsewhere, but there's no incentive in the system for those kinds of services to be commissioned. And we measure what professionals do, but we completely ignore what communities themselves do, or the contribution of volunteer time or volunteer activity. So the

way you do measuring and accounting in services is a real challenge.

And the final barrier is around the challenge of commissioning. Where co-production gets commissioned is where activities are not prescribed and instead there is a focus on outcomes, which allows creative approaches to how support is delivered. Where we focus on inputs and activities that's where co-production is really disincentivised; for me, outcomes-based commissioning with an expectation of co-production is really the way forward.



Catherine Needham

Catherine Needham draws on her research into co-production and personalisation to point out that there are many similarities between personalisation and co-production – they both value 'knowledge-based practice', incorporating the 'lived experience' of service users.

However co-production demands active involvement and decision-making by the person using a service, which goes further than personalisation's concern with tailoring services – and which may or may not involve active user engagement.

Co-production seems to be the answer to lots of questions currently facing public services: how to do more for less, how to involve citizens more effectively, how to get better outcomes. However as Chris Sherwood points out in his contribution, the exciting potential offered by co-production

must be tempered by a recognition of the barriers which currently limit its scope. Offloading responsibilities from the state to citizens as part of knee-jerk cost-cutting exercises are unlikely to deliver long-term cost savings or to be linked to better outcomes. Understanding the potential for

co-production to deliver on its promises requires recognition of how it intersects with broader trends in public service redesign, particularly including the move to more personalised services.

Chris Sherwood's contribution highlights the importance of changing the staff culture if co-production is to be a reality. This may include new organisational structures such as staff mutuals, which have been promoted as initiatives to foster innovation and more co-productive approaches. The University of Birmingham Policy Commission into the Future of Local Public Services¹ identified new roles that staff will play in twenty-first century public services – 'navigators', 'brokers', 'storytellers', 'resource-weavers' – as part of a process of making citizens 'co-authors of their own lives'. Allowing staff the freedom to operate more at arms-length may be part of making this a reality, and certainly should not be seen as in opposition to more citizen-centred approaches. Co-production as a form of private government may be evident as citizens

increasingly manage the resources that were previously spent by the state. For example, in social care services the shift to personal budgets involves the disaggregation of funding to the individual. In such a context, collective services and spaces such as day centres are closing and individuals are being encouraged to be commissioners as well as co-producers, purchasing services individually or as a group. This private management of state resources offers potential for individual and group forms of co-production to thrive, but it may be at the expense of collective forms of co-production in which activity is shared across a community or where the benefits generated are collective goods such as solidarity, increased social capital or political mobilisation.

This discussion highlights the need to be alert to the ways in which co-production will develop in public services which increasingly orient themselves to the personal. Both personalisation and co-production were initiatives championed by New Labour, and both have continued to enjoy government endorsement under the Coalition. Although personalisation is furthest developed in the social care sector, it is moving into the NHS with personal health budgets, and being piloted or considered for a wide range of other services, such as rough sleepers and children with special educational needs.

There are many similarities between personalisation and co-production, indicating that they can develop in mutually reinforcing ways. Both approaches assert the value of 'knowledge-based practice' or 'standpoint knowledge', incorporating the 'lived experience' of service users rather than assuming that professional practice should be shaped only by formal norms of evidence-gathering. Both approaches establish the frontline of public service delivery as the crucial site for effective policy interventions.

However, it is important also to recognise that there may be tensions between them. The assumptions underlying co-production are essentially relational, whereas personalisation can be framed in transactional and financial terms. Co-production demands active involvement and decision-making by the person using a service in collaboration with the traditional provider. In other words, co-productive approaches tend to frame service outcomes as being achieved through relationships, rather than at the end of a long delivery chain. Personalisation, on the other hand, focuses on the tailoring of the service to the individual user, which may involve collaborative relationships, but could take more transactional and consumerist forms.

Advocates of personalisation have argued for relational models that move beyond the transactional mechanics of personal budgets. However many local authorities seem to be bogged down in the technical aspects, such as the resource allocation system (RAS) for social care monies, rather than developing relational approaches. Pockets of innovation, such as Sandwell Borough Council's 'Friends and Neighbours' scheme, point the way to developing personalisation in ways that feel genuinely co-produced. This initiative builds personal budgets into a broader mapping of community assets and encourages people to combine their assets with others to stimulate responsive local service provision.

The Sandwell example highlights that co-production can be a way of transforming power relations, involving citizens in designing and managing services, not merely making them compliant in a series of tasks set for them by the state. Getting citizens involved in commissioning is crucial, as Chris Sherwood points out. One way to achieve that is to involve users more fully in identifying outcome-measures and building co-productive relationships with service providers at an early stage. It is here that co-production can be the 'catalyst for change' that he describes.

A number of organisations are involving users in commissioning or working on ways to develop more outcomes-based approaches to commissioning, and there are some exciting examples of what an outcome focus can deliver. However, there appears to be a trend among public service reformers to see outcomes-based commissioning as the answer to every conundrum facing public services – just as co-production has been also been seen. However, just like co-production, outcomes are conceptually vague, difficult to operationalise and can seem irrelevant to the day-to-day concerns of cash-strapped public services, making them a vital but partial way forward.

¹ <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/policy-commissions/index.aspx>



Jess Steele

Jess Steele's contribution shows that co-production may have a 'dark side' when the 'wrong' kind of providers enter the policy landscape. But it can also open up progressive possibilities. This matters for community-based organisations such as hers, not least because it brings an activist perspective into the debate. The questions raised by Jess go beyond the state/non state preoccupations and highlight a series of practical conditions that shape the co-production relationship at local level. This picks up ideas discussed in Part One - for whilst Locality's approach is influenced by Alinsky, its adoption of Re:generate's 'Root Solution Listening Matters' approach based on a large number of individual 'listenings' with residents in an area has more in common with Friere's emphasis on consciousness raising and the creation of a mass democratic movement.

<http://locality.org.uk/>

Locality is a membership body, a solidarity network for independent, community-led, neighbourhood-based organisations all over the country. We're very focused on using community-owned assets and community-driven enterprise to underpin social action. My background is as a community activist in Deptford where I led a regeneration programme called 'Get Set for Citizenship', using an unusual approach of engaging people in deciding on and writing the bid itself. I'm currently an activist in Hastings where I'm trying to save Hastings Pier through the sheer force of emotional rhetoric and dogged persistence.

So co-production is not all about services, it can be about the saving of assets, about neighbourhoods. I think there is something very important about the idea of a self-renovating neighbourhood: people looking out for their own, regenerating their own neighbourhoods on their own terms.

Generally the writings on third party government seem to position government as the only appropriate definer and steward of the public good, and forced by various less

sheer force of emotional rhetoric and dogged persistence

than ideal circumstances to work with third parties to deliver government's aims. But that is certainly not how it feels to me and I think to most of the communities that our members are based in. In those cases, the third parties - the communities themselves - would say they have as much claim to be able to define and deliver the public good as government itself and that representative democracy does not mean good definitions of the public good and certainly not good delivery of public interest. So if, in some cases, the third parties might have more integrity, more knowledge, more capacity, better reach and more innovative drive, what is it that makes the difference? Because you don't always have all those things. So what makes the difference between a dark side third party and a bright side third party like our members?

It seems to me it all comes down to the choice of the intermediary - the third party - and that the decision at the source of money and power has a huge impact all the way down the chain. These decisions are made in lots of different ways - some by formal procurement, some very opaque decision-making behind closed doors - but they're all problematic if they don't recognise some essential criteria.

There are four aspects to consider. One is about *listening or not listening*. There's this assumption that election means that politicians have listened or will listen. And it might be true that they're able to catch the mood and therefore catch the votes, but that certainly doesn't translate into good implementation, because they don't listen systematically and because they rely on a civil service that is actually trained to contain and to avoid listening to others, to avoid the contamination of partiality. So on the good side of co-production are organisations that listen to users and to citizens. And on the bad side are the ones that don't.

The second aspect, it seems to me, is about *scale*. There is talk all the time about the economies of scale but we're doing a piece of work at the moment about diseconomies of scale. We can see in the Work Programme, scale introduced as something that makes life easier for the procurers and makes life very difficult indeed for everybody else. The economies of small scale are about the trust, respect and relationships you can build at a fine grain level, the detailed knowledge that you can generate about both people and places. I always talk about Locality members as bifocal. They're very focused on their neighbourhood; they know it inside out. But they're also able to look up and look around to create a solidarity network with each other which raises their horizons beyond the parochial, although the parochial remains a driving force that makes them good community-based deliverers.

The third aspect is about *timescale*. If your motivation is driven by payment-by-results and profit or by voting and elections, then you will be imposing an agenda, a time scaled agenda on social problems and issues that have their own timescales. So we should be defining timescales by what we're trying to achieve. You need a long timeframe for generational behavioural

*there is enormous scope
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production at the local
level*

change. You need a short and impatient timeframe for sorting out empty buildings: 'Let's just get in and do something in the meanwhile.' Not all timescales should be the same. Some are long, some are short. But they shouldn't be defined by the motivation of the deliverer.

And that's the final thing - this idea of *purpose and motivation*. This is not about legal structures, because we've seen charities that are motivated by the wrong kind of drivers. Rather it's about the values. If motivation is about profit, market share, protecting the status quo of power, then that commodifies the people involved and disrespects the places involved. And it means that there is no attempt to understand or harness the most important asset of all, what I think of as the 'problematic citizenry'. The problematic citizenry is exactly what we need in this country. We don't have enough of them. We have too many well-behaved citizens and not enough problematic citizens raising issues. We need to be able to understand and harness those assets at the fine grain level.

So it seems to me, if you get those things wrong, you get dark-side providers. And if you get those things right, there is enormous scope for really good co-production at the local level.

Creating new democratic possibilities

Catherine Durose, Jonathan Justice and Chris Skelcher

This pamphlet's contributions from practitioners as well as researchers collectively show the value of moving beyond a perspective that recognises the state as the only legitimate centre of authority. In this sense, 'beyond the state' is an appropriate title. At the same time, however, the contributors challenge an assumption in our title. For 'beyond the state' implies that non-state models of collective choice and action are somehow secondary or less fundamental than those of government.

The evidence from the contributors is that community organising and co-production are not somehow second best models, when compared to government provision. They show that there is a vital energy that can be

there is a vital energy that can be mobilised

mobilised but that it cannot be shaped to government's agendas. Community organising and co-production are political processes that create new possibilities that are not solely oppositional but also collaborative.

The essays here reveal an image of society that is 'polycentric' – it recognises that multiple centres of collective decision and action can legitimately co-exist³. It proposes that rather than attempt to consolidate all decision making into government, we can take human needs and responsibilities as our starting point and then configure a system of governing institutions that works to fulfil those values. Polycentrism may be particularly useful for understanding the practices of contemporary governance in a descriptive sense as well as for expressing

design principles and goals of the types of governance we want to create.

The implications for those in policy and practice – whether in the community or inside government – is that we should value a perspective that emphasises the discovery and fulfilment of communities' and individuals' goals as the legitimate basis for state as well as non-state action. This can be a struggle for those in government, used to traditional models of policy making and service delivery, and trying to reconcile the political legitimacy of politicians with the demands and campaigns of users and communities.

The contributions also show that practitioners and policy makers need to seek clarity about the assumptions underlying the use of the language of co-production, and similar terms such as empowerment, personalisation, and so on. These are slippery terms capable of multiple meanings. And in fact, given the recent vogue for 'community organising', it may be that this phrase will become similarly slippery. These are important issues given the halo that currently surrounds the term 'co-production'.

The contributions in this pamphlet suggest some ways forward. A polycentric perspective empowers participants to see and thus possibly to understand the existence, implications, and potentialities of actual governance. The state has become and is likely to remain a focal institution for defining and accomplishing shared purposes. But its monopoly on the legitimate use of coercion need not imply a monopoly on the legitimate use of collective decision and action. So we should continue to look past the language to observe the actual processes and results of power, and to look beyond the state alone for solutions.

³ Polycentrism is a term popularised by US academics Elinor and Vincent Ostrom

Contributor Biographies

Catherine Durose is Director of Research at the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham. Catherine is interested in the restructuring of relationships between the citizen, communities and the state and her work has spanned local governance, neighbourhood working, participation and empowerment. Catherine has conducted research with a range of public bodies and is currently advising the Office of Civil Society's evaluation of the Community Organisers and Community First initiatives.

Alejandra Ibañez is a Program Officer at Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation. She immigrated to the United States from Chile in 1977. Since making Chicago her home in 1989, Alejandra has worked in both the public and non-profit sectors, including serving as Chief of Staff to Illinois State Representative Sonia Silva and serving as Executive Director at Pilsen Alliance. Alejandra is on the Board of Crossroads Fund which supports community organizations working on issues of racial, social and economic justice in the Chicago area.

Lina Jamoul is the Lead Organiser of the East London Communities Organisation (TELCO), the largest of the Citizens UK chapters. Lina has 10 years' experience of community organising and has trained over a thousand local leaders in organising in both the US and UK. During her three years in Chicago with the Industrial Areas Foundation, she helped to organise a campaign, which saw an injection of \$250 million into affordable housing.

Jonathan Justice is Associate Professor in the School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware. Jonathan previously worked for the City of New York as a capital programme administrator, and for non-profit organisations in the New York metropolitan

area as an economic development program manager. His areas of specialisation include public budgeting and finance, accountability and decision making, and local economic development. He has recently co-edited the *Handbook of Local Government Fiscal Health*.

Catherine Needham is Senior Lecturer at the Health Services Management Centre, at the University of Birmingham where she develops research around public service reform and policy innovation. Catherine has looked at the role of co-production and personalisation as policy narratives, examining how those narratives are interpreted and applied in front-line practice. Her most recent book was published by the Policy Press in 2011 entitled, *Personalising Public Services: Understanding the Personalisation Agenda*.

Janet Newman is Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Social Science at the Open University, UK. Before becoming an academic she worked in local government and was involved in numerous social and political projects. Her research interests include questions of governance, politics and power. Recent publications have focused on activist engagements with governance, on the politics of austerity, on public leadership as public-making and on working across the academic/practitioner boundary.

Liz Richardson is Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Manchester, and a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). She is a Director of a community charity, the National Communities Resource Centre. Her research interests lie in civic renewal, neighbourhood and local governance, community engagement and behaviour change tools.

Chris Sherwood is Director of Policy and Research at Relate and previously held a similar position at Scope. Chris is also co-founder of Guerilla Policy. Chris was worked in local government and the third sector where his focus has been on innovation and service improvement in welfare to work, family support and social care.

Chris Skelcher is Professor of Public Governance in the University of Birmingham's School of Government and Society. His research and teaching focus on the transformation of UK governance in an international context and co-authored a widely read study of partnership working, *Working Across Boundaries: Collaboration in Public Services*, published by Macmillan/Palgrave. Chris is currently leading a three year ESRC study of the reform of public bodies and their changing relationships with sponsor departments.

Jess Steele is Director of Innovation for Locality where she leads the development and delivery of the national Community Organisers programme. As a community activist and entrepreneur in South East London she founded the creative outreach charity Magpie, led the award-winning 'Get Set for Citizenship' regeneration programme and established several local social enterprises. Jess lives in and works from Hastings and is the Treasurer of the Hastings Pier and White Rock Trust.

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