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Public Services Coproduction: A conceptual review based on the relationship between the Citizen and the State

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Συμπαράγωγή Δημοσίων Υπηρεσιών: Μια εννοιολογική ανασκόπηση βασισμένη στη σχέση μεταξύ του Πολίτη και του Κράτους

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ABSTRACT

Public service coproduction is the term used to indicate the active involvement of the citizen/service-user in the process of design and production of that service. The evolution of the concept of Citizenship into that of Active Citizenship and the role attributed to the Citizen-Coproducer, has led scientists to support the idea of a quasi-renegotiation of the traditional Social Contract into a new context based on principles of the coproduction paradigm. The article argues that Coproduction is no panacea: participation in itself can become the antidote neither to the social inequalities nor the absence of balance between the various social groups.

KEY WORDS: Coproduction, Co-creation, Active Citizenship, New Public Governance, NPG.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ο όρος «συμπαράγωγή δημοσίων υπηρεσιών» χρησιμοποιείται προκειμένου να αποδοθεί η ενεργός εμπλοκή του πολίτη - χρήστη μίας δημόσιας υπηρεσίας κατά τη διαδικασία σχεδιασμού και παροχής της. Η εξέλιξη της έννοιας του Πολίτη σε αυτήν του Ενεργού Πολίτη, αλλά και ο ρόλος που αποδόθηκε στον Πολίτη-Συμπαράγωγό, οδήγησε ορισμένους επιστήμονες στην διατύπωση της άποψης περί μίας οιονεί επαναδιαπραγμάτευσης του Κοινωνικού Συμβολαίου στη βάση της συμπαράγωγής. Το άρθρο υποστηρίζει ότι η συμπαράγωγή, ωστόσο, δεν είναι πανάκεια: η συμμετοχικότητα δεν μπορεί από μόνη της να αποτελέσει το αντίδοτο ούτε στις δομικές ανισότητες που υπάρχουν στην κοινωνία αλλά ούτε και στην έλλειψη ισορροπίας δυνάμεων μεταξύ των διαφόρων κοινωνικών ομάδων.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Συμπαράγωγή, Συνδημιουργία, Ενεργός Πολίτης, Νέα Δημόσια Διακυβέρνηση.

1. Introduction

About four and a half decades ago, Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues from Indiana University formulated their theory of Service Coproduction; a relatively simple but fundamental concept, namely that not only the consumption but also the production of public services may require citizen participation (Ostrom, 1978), giving birth to the concept of coproduction. Its conceptual framework was structured on the basis of the two categories of implicated actors: the "normal" producer

(i.e. the competent Public Service Organization -hereinafter PSO) on the one hand and the "consumer" producer (i.e. the citizen – service user) on the other, each of whom - according to Ostrom – strives to maximize its benefit/cost ratio.

In that respect, coproduction is based on the existence of an active and participatory population of citizens/service-users who are at the same time both producers and consumers. In the area where the two sets intersect, the interaction between the consumer and the producer becomes automatically an internal function and the service is provided by a quasi-consortium of producers and users/consumers.

Pestoff (2018) supports that the roles of the actors as well as the very concept of coproduction stand at a crossroads where different administrative models intersect, each of which has its own perspective regarding where, when, and why citizens can (and/or should) participate in the design and/or production of public services. This perspective is based, to a large extent, on the role that each model assigns to the citizens - users of the services - which in effect forms the basis of the conceptual framework of coproduction being applied by each respective model.

The intrinsic relationship that links the concept of coproduction to that of citizenship automatically places coproduction within a wider political context, right at the center of the perpetual public dialogue/debate taking place since the conception of the State, concerning the ever-changing concept of citizenship and the relationship between the Citizen and the State.

2. From the Citizen to the Active Citizen-Coproducer

Citizen, according to Aristotle, is a person who actively participates in the functions of the State (Aristotle and Lord, 2013). Respectively, for Marshall (1951), citizenship is attributed to a full member of a community whose relationship with that community is governed by a set of mutual rights and obligations. Similarly, the Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology, by the term "citizenship" refers to the attribute of a person as a member of a political community that is organized as a state at the national or regional level.

Given that each polity defines the content of citizenship in its own way, the concepts of "Citizen" and "Polity" are interweaved, with citizenship varying significantly in direct relation to the governance system and the different political traditions that exist, not only between different societies, but also between different historical periods of the same society. Thus, every society, based on the particular institutional and cultural context within which it operates in each historical period, defines the set of values and the (written or unwritten) rules that determine the role of the citizen and consequently the nature and content of the concept of citizenship.

In democracy, citizens actively participate in the management public affairs; have the right to assume public office; and to freely express his/her opinion in public (Aristotle and Lord, 2013). The degree of citizen participation is considered to have a significant impact on the overall health of the governance system and its potential to create value in the public sphere (Bryson et al., 2015).

The need for increased civic engagement in recent years, has brought forward the concept of the "Active Citizen" - a term introduced by the British conservative politician Douglas Hurd in the 1980s. The notion of the Active Citizen served as the basis for a series of government initiatives, such as John Major's "Make a Difference" campaign, aimed at promoting voluntarism and increasing citizens' contribution to society. Active Citizenship is founded on the idea that a society should not focus exclusively on rights, but equally - if not more - on the responsibilities and obligations of its members. In that respect, citizens have the obligation to take care

of themselves, each other, and society as a whole and thus, they should be self-reliant and self-sufficient; willing to voluntarily assist other people in their social network; and last but not least, willing to actively contribute to the improvement of the public services provided to them (van de Bovenkamp, 2010).

From there, emerges a new - significantly expanded - role of the Citizen; one that goes well beyond the Aristotelian notion of political participation, actively involving the citizens in the processes of planning and provision of the public services they consume. A role inherent in the concept of coproduction.

3. The evolution of the modern State

Of course, in the Citizen - State relationship, the Citizen consists one side of the di-pole; the other is the Public Administration. Over time, scientists from the field of Public Administration and Management have been observing significant changes taking effect regarding the organization and functioning of the State. This was attributed mainly to governments' efforts aiming to improve the quality of the provided services (and reduction of the associated costs); to enhance the credibility of administrative decisions; and – perhaps most importantly - to increase the legitimacy of public governance vis-à-vis their citizens (Pealpez, 2001). These changes have been incorporated into the three dominant paradigms or "post-reform models" of Public Administration: Traditional Public Administration, New Public Management, and New Public Governance (thereinafter TPA, NPM and NPG respectively), each adopting a different approach to the State-Citizen relationship.

3.1. The model of Traditional Public Administration

During the first period after the introduction of the modern version of the Public Sector, around the end of the 19th century, the world witnessed the emergence of the administrative model of the Traditional Public Administration, which was destined to become the dominant model of the organization of the State for more than a century. The scientific origins of TPA can be traced in the field of political science, where important academics such as Woodrow Wilson, William Robson and especially Max Weber laid its theoretical foundations. At its core lies the pursuit for a unified functioning of the state, through a vertical configuration of the processes regarding policy design and implementation. Therefore, public policy decisions are made "higher up" in the system by democratically elected (and politically accountable) politicians and implemented by professional public administration employees. Precisely because of its vertically organized structure, the hierarchy constitutes the "soul" of TPA, while the utilization of production line management methodologies, coupled with on a strong value base built on the civil servant code of ethics (Day and Klein, 1987; Simey, 1988), guarantee the effective supervision and necessary accountability regarding the management of public funds and the provision of public services.

Thus, the processes of public services design, as well as planning, organization and provision (referred collectively with the term "production" thereinafter) are structured on the basis of the above-mentioned hierarchical model, with the State maintaining their ownership while the execution is assigned exclusively to the professional staff of the Public Administration whose competencies, specialized knowledge and skills, together with a high level of professionalism and ethics would (at least in theory) ensure the appropriate quality and quantity of the provided services (Brandson et al., 2018).

In the context of TPA, the interaction between the State and the Citizen is limited and strictly demarcated: the citizens vote and the State protects their rights and provides them with public services. Accordingly, the Citizen is treated as a passive consumer of public services, whose - occasional and limited - involvement in the service production processes is considered as an add-on or an externality to the normal delivery system, serving the purpose of increasing civic engagement and improving the quality of de-mocracy (Bovaird, 2007; Brudney, 1987; Ostrom, 1999; Pestoff, 2006).

3.2 The model of the New Public Management

Finally, during the 1980s the TPA model came under intense criticism, particularly on the basis of its perceived lack of efficiency - an attribute considered the main advantage of the Market. For this reason, as early as the end of the 1970s, but mainly during the 1980s, the "torch" passed onto the hands of the New Public Management (NPM), with the State being confined to the role of the "navigator" (i.e. designer of the services) and the burden of "rowing" (i.e. the production of the services) was transferred to the private sector (through contracting, public-private cooperation schemes, etc.).

Osborn (2006, p. 7) refers to NPM as "is a child of neo-classical economics and particularly of rational/public choice theory" that "is concerned with a disaggregated state, where policy-making and implementation are at least partially articulated and disengaged, and where implementation is through a collection of independent service units, ideally in competition with each other". According to him, NPM focuses almost entirely on intra-organizational and management processes; emphasizes the economy and efficiency of (independent) functional units involved in the production of public services; and encourages the existence of competitive relationships between the independent business units that operate within each policy sector. These relationships are defined in the context of a horizontal market, which operates under rules based on a combination of competition, central price setting, and contractual relationships.

In this context, the focus is diverted away from the compliance with strict procedures and rules (as with TPA), towards the radical improvement of the outputs of the service delivery system. The main goal here is the satisfaction of the citizen/client, with the measure of his/her satisfaction serving as the main indicator of the efficiency of the service production system. Its value base lies in the belief that the market and its functions suffice to provide the appropriate framework for public services production - on the grounds that in the "normal" market competition is considered as the main driver for quality improvement (ibid).

In the years that followed its introduction, NPM came upon heavy criticism on a wide range of issues (as mentioned in works by Drechsler (2014), Dunn and Miller (2007), Farnham and Horton (1996), Ferlie et. al (1996), McLaughlin et al. (2002), etc.), most of which was directed to NPM's almost exclusive focus on the intra-organizational level as well as its adherence to (outdated and inappropriate, according to its critics) management methods derived from the private sector.

NPM prescribed a new role for the citizen, that of the client-consumer; one who would have a choice between various providers of (state-funded) public services that could potentially be produced by either the public or the private (for-profit or not-for-profit) sector of the economy. The adoption of NPM aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public services through the use of market mechanisms, such as "choice", "exit" and "protest" (Hirschman, 2004), reserving for the citizen the role of the consumer of the services - a role very much alike the one held by the citizen in the TPA model as well.

Comparing the two models, TPA can be associated to the political dimension of Public Administration and Management, with its power derived mainly from its ability to perceive and interpret the complexity and special fabric of the policy design processes. However, as far as the implementation of the policy is concerned, that aspect of governance is treated as a "black box", in effect avoiding to deal with the complex sub-processes related to the management of the outputs of the political process - i.e. the production of the public services themselves (Osborne, 2006). On the other side, the power of NPM lies precisely in its ability to handle the complexity of the above "black box". Its own, however, "tragic flaw" is a view of the political process, merely as a context within which the processes of public management take place.

Finally, both models were considered limited and one-dimensional in regards to their ability to effectively respond to the complexity of the administration and management of public services, within the multi-factorial and multi-dimensional system of policy planning and implementation of the 21st century (Rhodes, 1997).

3.3. The rising model of the New Public Governance

Over time, serious challenges such as population aging, semi-permanent fiscal austerity, poverty, social inequalities and the marginalization of entire social groups, combined with the realization of democratic deficit at the various levels of governance, have pushed many governments to seek new ways in order to involve citizens in the processes both of policy-making and – especially – public services production (Pestoff, 2009).

Within this socio-political environment, the explosive development of ICT and the associated phenomenon of the "Network Society" (Castells and Castells, 2010), acted as a catalyst for the evolution of both TPA and NPM into a more complex and multi-dimensional governance system, that of the New Public Governance (NPG); a model where citizens, both individually and collectively, acquire a more active role as co-creators of service delivery systems and coproducers of the public services they use (Osborne, 2010, 2006; Pestoff et al., 2013).

According to Osborn (2010), NPG is not a new paradigm of a Public Administration and Management system (like TPA and NPM), but rather a theoretical/conceptual model used for the analysis and interpretation of the processes pertaining the planning and implementation of public policies in the 21st century. Its conceptual framework is based on the existence of many independent factors participating in the production of public services (plural state) and multiple processes that co-shape the policy planning and implementation system (pluralist state).

NPG looks beyond the procedures and hierarchies of TPA as well as the efficiency-maximization tendency of NPM and focuses primarily on the – social – impact of the services provided. It is concerned mainly with process governance and inter-organizational relationships (as opposed to the intra-organizational logic of NPM) which are developed through the interaction between partners, regardless of their sector of origin (i.e. public, private or social sector). At its core are the trust and relational capital developed between cooperating partners over time (Bovaird, 2006). At the same time, NPG emphasizes collaboration and negotiation between partners, regardless of whether public, private or non-profit. Given this focus, user participation and mutual dialog between service users and the staff replaces professionalism or competition as the main guarantee of service quality (Vidal, 2013).

To this end, a key pillar of the NPG paradigm is the development of a cooperative relationship between the Citizen and the State, in the context of which the citizens are considered as coproducers of public services. The direct involvement of citizen/service-users in the production

of services grants them access to - and sometimes even control over - the service delivery system. That, in turn, facilitates the development of dialogue and cooperation between citizens/coproducers and the professional staff of the responsible PSO on a number of issues related especially to the quality of service provision.

Thus, in the context of NPG, PSOs are replaced by Service Delivery Systems (herein-after SDS), where the cooperation between a multitude of actors is necessary for the production of services and the achievement of social goals (Osborne et al., 2013).

An example of the above can be identified in the (institutionalized) integrated civil protection plan "IOLAOS" for the delivery of forest protection and firefighting services in Greece. The SDS set forth by IOLAOS attempts to coordinate of all the competent actors: the state's PSOs (Fire Department, Police, etc.), together with the Local Government Organizations (LGOs) at both the municipal and regional level, as well as the registered Voluntary Community Organizations (VCOs). Key parameter to the success of the SDS's goals is the appropriate utilization of the citizen-coproducers operating within or in cooperation with all major actors (Fire Dept, LGOs and PSOs).

3.4. On the way to a new Social Contract

The transition between the abovementioned models of Public Administration can be interpreted, on the one hand, as an attempt of the State to adapt to the inevitable changes taking place within society and affecting - directly or indirectly - both the role and position of the State within its political/social/economic environment; and on the other hand, as the tendency of governments to develop a closer relationship with that particular environment.

Given that each model has a different approach regarding the role of the Citizen vis-à-vis the State, Meijer (2016) argues that transitioning from one model to another can be considered as a quasi-renegotiation of the Social Contract. The basic idea behind the traditional Social Contract (associated mainly with TPA) is that citizens provide resources (through taxation) and legitimacy (through the elections) to the State, in return for fair and equal treatment. The advent of NPM, which emphasizes the exploitation of tools of the Market in order for the citizen to claim higher quality public services, redefines the Social Contract by considering the State's outputs (i.e. the provided services) as its new legitimization basis.

Finally, the emergence of NPG introduces a more participatory and interactive model of governance which attempts to involve citizens not only in the political decision-making processes, but also in the planning and practical implementation of State policies (Osborne, 2006). To this end, it is no longer sufficient for the citizens to provide resources and legitimacy, but also to actively participate in the very production of the public services they consume/use (see Alford, 2009; Pestoff et al., 2013).

This, according to Meijer (2016), causes - and at the same time presupposes - a change in the established distribution of roles and responsibilities between the Citizen and the State. A change that ultimately constitutes the introduction of new Social Contract; one that is built on a horizontal relationship of trust and cooperation between the State and the Citizen.

4. The concept of Service Coproduction

In the previous sections the concept of coproduction was linked to wider issues that have been the subject of public debate within both the academic community and the society and are directly related to the role of the Citizen vis-à-vis the State. Below, the concept of coproduction is presented in more detail, starting with a review of its origins and evolution through time to become a core element of the most advanced public governance systems of the 21st century.

4.1. A brief historical review

Services coproduction isn't something new; it is a concept with quite an extensive "re-sume" of practical application throughout the world: from juries to volunteer militia groups and all the way to forest protection/firefighting. Its conception is attributed to the Nobel Prize holder political scientist and economist Elinor Ostrom and the Laboratory for Political Theory and Analysis of Indiana University, who in her monumental work "Citizen Participation and Policing: What Do We Know?" (Ostrom et al., 1978), refers to the role of citizens and local communities in the coproduction of security. Due to Ostrom's endorsement of the principles of TPA, public services coproduction was initially linked to the concepts of citizen participation in public affairs (Bovaird, 2007; Brudney, 1987; Ostrom, 1999; Pestoff, 2006) and of improving the quality of democracy (Alford, 2002; Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 2000).

The private sector quickly became aware of the potential of coproduction. So, by the end of the 1990s, the idea of active customer involvement in service provision had gained a dominant position in various market sectors (Ramirez, 1999; Wikström, 1996) e.g. self-service supermarkets, bank ATMs, web banking applications, etc., leading finally to the development of the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and the theory of Value Co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

In the public sector, after a first wave of attention between the late 1970s and the 1980s, the interest on coproduction started to fade, while at the same time the political spotlight began to shine on the promising new model of NPM. However, the interest in coproduction revived in the 2000s and especially 2010s when - mainly due to the effects of the global economic crisis of 2008 - governments were forced to introduce major cuts in public spending and coproduction was considered as a "decent" way to reduce costs of the public services - sometimes in a desperate attempt to save them from abolition (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012). Presenting coproduction as a panacea, automatically placed it at the center of an extensive public dialogue that took place internationally at both the ideological and the political level, a typical example of which being the "Big Society Debate" in Great Britain (Ishkanian and Szreter, 2012).

At the same time, a part of the scientific community was examining whether coproduction actually produces - all or some of - the above outcomes. The results of this undertaking were for the most part inconclusive: Vamstad (2012), for example, based on studies that showed that in Sweden the quality of co-produced childcare services is higher than that provided exclusively by the care of the Municipalities, supports that the coproduction can indeed offer a higher quality of public services. Fledderus (2016), for his part, implies that he did not manage to answer with certainty the question of whether coproduction can increase trust between citizens and PSOs. Finally, Brandsen & Helderma (2012) and Rosentraub and Sharp (1981) argue that, under specific conditions, the coproduced services may not be equally accessible to all their potential users and also, that the process of coproduction, in itself, may not promote/encourage the participation of all interested citizen/user groups. Thus, the question remains unanswered - at least with the desired degree of certainty.

Alongside the above research, a large part of the related scientific community focused on the question of what the concept of coproduction really means. It is held that during the 1970s and the 1980s the term had more economic connotations with a focus mainly on increasing the efficiency of service delivery processes (e.g. Brudney and England, 1983), while after 2000 the emphasis shifted to the direction of a more political/administrative approach, focusing more on the effort and the resources contributed by the various actors, as well as the dynamics of interactions between them (e.g. Bovaird, 2007).

4.2. Defining Coproduction

The concept of Service Coproduction is being widely addressed in the scientific bibliography both in the fields of Public Administration & Management (Alford, 2009a; Bovaird, 2007; Brudney & England, 1983; E. Ostrom et al., 1978; Parks et al., 1981; Pestoff et al., 2013; Rosentraub & Sharp, 1981; Whitaker, 1980, κ.λπ.) and Service Management (Gronroos, 2007; Normann, 2001; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008; Ve-netis & Ghauri, 2004, κ.λπ.), in order to denote the active involvement of a service's user/consumer in the process of the design and production of that service. In one of the earliest conceptualizations of coproduction, Parks et al. (1981) describe it as the mix of actions/activities implemented by PSOs, together with groups of citizens for the production of public services with the aim of increasing their quality and/or quantity. Much later, in a similar manner, Loeffler (2011) argues that, in the context of coproduction, the public sector and citizens leverage each other's resources and assets with the aim of achieving better results or improved performance.

Ostrom (1996) defines coproduction as a process by which the inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals that do not belong to the same organization. Ramirez (1999), a major thinker on the topic value co-creation, considers coproduction as the value produced by two or more subjects, acting jointly and for common benefit. Joshi and Moore (2004), narrowed down the scope of the concept of coproduction with the term "institutionalized coproduction", by which they defined the provision of public services through regular, long-term relationships between government agencies on the one hand and of organized citizen groups on the other, in the context of which both actors make a significant contribution of resources.

Attempting to include non-state actors, Bovaird (2007) defined coproduction as the provision of services through regular, long-term relationships, developed between professional providers (belonging to any sector of the economy), service users and/or other members of society, in the context of which all participants contribute significant resources – a definition later endorsed also by Osborn and Strokosch (2013).

Finally, Alford (2009) defined coproduction as any active behavior manifested by an individual or organization that does not belong to the competent PSO, which:

- a) is either connected/related to the production or (if independent from it) is caused by the results/outcomes of the service;
- b) is (at least partially) voluntary; and finally,
- c) intentionally or unintentionally creates private and/or public value, in the form of outputs and/or results/outcomes.

From the above, becomes evident that there exists a number of approaches to the concept of coproduction which, as the case may be, differ in terms of the role attributed to the citizen-coproducer, the various types and forms of coproduction, the tasks included in the potential coproduction, etc.

5. The multi-dimensional role of the Citizen-Coproducer

Bovaird (2007) supports that service users and their communities can and should be involved in the planning and production of public services and goes on to list a wide range of relationships that develop between service users and the competent PSOs, which are contingent on the respective role that each actor maintains in the planning and production of the particular public services.

In this context, some typical examples of coproduction include:

- a) Members of local communities participating in neighborhood watch groups (Fledderus and Honingh, 2016);
- b) Parents involved in the provision of childcare services (Pestoff, 2008; Thom-sen, 2015);
- c) Tenants of social housing structures consulting with the competent Municipality on issues regarding the improvement of the relevant infrastructure (Need-ham, 2008);
- d) Volunteer caregivers assisting elderly people (Wilson, 1994);
- e) Citizens participating in the participatory budgeting process of their Municipality (Barbera et al., 2016),
- f) Volunteers assisting in forest protection and firefighting (Pandelidis and Tzi-ritis, 2009), etc.

These examples make it clear that both the role of citizens in the service production process and its relation to the produced values can vary significantly, depending on the specific case of coproduction. Thus, citizen-coproducers, in some cases may enjoy private value (as in the case of neighborhood watch groups), while in other cases their work may be aimed to the production of public value (as in the case of participatory budgeting), or even private value for other people (as in the case of elderly caregivers). The diverse role of the citizen-coproducer is reflected in the relevant scientific bibliography with terms such as "customer", "consumer", "user", "stakeholder", "citizen", "taxpayer" or simply "the public", while his/her participation is defined, as the case may be, on an individual and/or collective basis.

Voorberg et al. (2015), identify three types of citizen-co-producers, on the basis of their degree/level of involvement:

- a) The "co-implementer/co-producer" as in the case of waste management, the participation of citizens is necessary for the sorting of the various types of waste ("sorting at the source") and therefore is limited to the execution of processing tasks (Ben-Ari, 1990);
- b) The "co-designer" where, although the general policy is determined by the PSO, the particular method employed in service provision is selected/designed by the citizens, as for example in cases where citizens participate in the maintenance of equipment for outdoor recreation areas after the invitation of the relevant Municipality and in that context they plan and organize the implementation of the work by themselves (Wipf et al., 2009); and lastly,
- c) The "co-initiator" of an activity that the state - at a later stage - adopts and invests in. An example is the citizens' initiative for the restoration of monuments in the historic center of Naples, when it was reopened to the public (Rossi, 2004).

Alford (2002), in the context of his research on the parameters that influence the willingness and/or ability of individuals to participate in public service coproduction activities, distinguishes three categories of participants, Citizens, Customers and Volunteers, as follows:

- a) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity in the capacity of the "Citizen", from the produced service seeks to create public value. The Citizen is part of a collective "we",

utilizing institutional forms of opinion voicing, such as voting, while at the same time, his/her relationship with the State is gov-erned by an integrated set of rights, obligations and responsibilities;

b) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity in the capacity of the "Customer", from the produced service seeks to create private value to be enjoyed by him/herself and/or other individuals related to him/her; and lastly,

c) An individual who participates in a coproduction activity and from the service produced does not enjoy (substantial) public or private value, is considered a "Volunteer".

It is pointed out, however, that the different attributes or roles of an individual, pre-scribed in the above categorization scheme may coexist. More specifically, a person may fall into more than one category at the same time (e.g. the person participating in a coproduction activity may concurrently maintain the status of the citizen and the client).

Focusing on the category of "Customers", Alford (2016), further identifies the im-portant subcategories of:

a) Beneficiaries, who - unlike other customers - do not pay for the public services they use/consume. These, for example, include public school students or resi-dents of social housing structures, etc.; and

b) Obligatees, who are coerced by the State to use/consume certain public ser-vices, regardless of - or even against - their will (such as tax-payers, prisoners, etc.), who through their compliance with the relevant regulatory framework, participate (albeit passively) in the produc-tion of the respective service (e.g. the prisoner through compliance coproduces security for the citizens).

According to Alford (2002), each of the above roles (citizen, customer and volunteer) pro-duces different clusters of interests, expectations and stakes which, in turn, largely determine the factors that influence the tendency of people to get initially involved and maintain their involve-ment in public service coproduction activities.

6. Obstacles and limitations to the implementation of Copro-duction

Voorberg et al. (2014), in the context of their research on the causes of the ineffective imple-mentation of coproduction, categorize the causes into (a) those that can be at-tributed to the competent PSO and (b) those that can be attributed to citizen-coproducers. On the side of the PSO, they consider as the most significant causes:

a) The conservatism and/or the lack of a relevant vision and strategy on the part of the political and administrative leadership;

b) The (consequent) lack of the necessary resources (e.g. equipment and facili-ties); as well as

c) The existence of administrative structures and operational procedures that are not suit-able for the implementation of coproduction activities.

Accordingly, on the side of citizen-coproducers, they argue that the problems can be mainly link to:

a) the lack of clear motivation and willingness;

b) the lack of the necessary skills; as well as

c) the lack of sufficient social capital in the local society.

Osborn and Strokosch (2013), referring to the reasons behind the reluctance of PSOs to engage in coproduction activities, argue that PSOs may consider that coproduction is time-consuming, requires excessive resources and distracts the professional staff from the "real work" related to the efficient provision of services. PSOs, also express their reluctance regarding the involvement of citizens in the planning and production of public services, mainly due to the belief that the citizen-coproducers may make co-ordination and consensus-building more difficult for the professional staff (Levine and Fisher, 1984).

Bovaird (2007) mentions numerous studies that refer to the existence of problems in the cooperation between citizen-coproducers and the professional staff of the competent PSOs. In that context, he reports on several occasions where a strong resistance was expressed on the part of PSO employees against the delegation of responsibility for the execution of critical tasks by citizen-coproducers or networks/collectives thereof. Their criticism focuses on the potential lack of both professionalism and responsibility in their behavior as well as skills and knowledge required to perform the relevant duties. This attitude of the PSOs' staff towards coproduction reflects - and at the same time shapes/reinforces - a corresponding attitude on the part of their political leaders; a fact which, according to Bovaird & Loeffler (2012), is mainly due to their own tendency to avoid potential risk of losing their position of power and control.

Frieling et al. (2014) argue that a common criticism regarding participatory activities in general, is that the contribution of citizens is not taken seriously enough by the PSO, as it is considered to be symbolic rather than substantial. This very lack of recognition and appreciation of citizens' contribution, combined with the inherent difficulty of finding tangible evidence for the creation of (individual or public) value for their benefit, list among the main factors preventing citizens from getting involved or continuing to participate in coproduction activities (Ross and Needham, 2013). Other deterrent factors are the ambiguity of roles, the phenomenon of "free-riders" as well as the fatigue of citizen-coproducers and local communities from repeatedly participating in coproduction activities (Alford and Hughes, 2008; Bovaird, 2007; Simmons and Birchall, 2005; Taylor, 2003).

Another serious problem related to coproduction are the conflicts that occur among the citizen-coproducers and which are due to a multitude of factors such as a conflict of interests, needs or opinions, and/or differences in values, motivations, etc. (Taylor, 2003). Conflicts, however, may also exist between citizen-coproducers and other members of the local community; as Bovaird (2007) points out, the results of self-organization entailed by coproduction are not always accepted by society - a fact that can also be interpreted as a consequence of the "conflict" or "clash" that is sometimes observed between the private and public values being created through the coproduction activity. Thus, for example, accusations of abusing the role of coproducer for one's own benefit may be expressed (openly or covertly).

Lastly, as Bovaird (2007) claims, coproduction - by its very nature - blurs the line that separates the competencies/responsibilities between the public and the private sector, thus creating conditions that may cause diffusion of responsibilities and cancellation (in practice) of public accountability on the part of the political officials and professional staff of the competent PSOs. This particular issue, as well as other important issues related to the institutional arrangements regarding the implementation of the coproduction model, are of critical importance, as they have the potential to undermine the overall prestige and value of the coproduction paradigm and therefore are presented in more detail below.

7. Institutional issues raised by Coproduction

Coproduction, as mentioned in previous sections of this document, is based on the undertaking of joint actions on the part of the competent PSOs and their respective clients/service-users, that take place within the framework of standard service provision processes; and as such, the citizen participation - in general - does not seem to require any special legal regulation. In this context, the well-known saying "what is not prohibited is permitted" remains the basic principle that governs the role of citizens within a legal system. However, regarding the participation of citizens in the production of public services, this rule contradicts the fundamental principle that the provision of public services is the sole responsibility of the State (Szescito, 2018).

In that respect, citizens who coproduce public services inevitably enter the State's area of competence/responsibility, thus raising a host of legal questions as they attempt to perform functions that have been delegated by legislation exclusively to public bodies. For example, the co-planning activity concerning participatory budgeting of a Municipality, requires modifications to the budget preparation procedures provided for in the relevant legislation - especially in this particular case where the role of citizens is not limited to advisory but it has a decisive manner as well. Thus, granting citizens the right to co-decide on the budget interferes with the respective exclusive institutional capacity of the competent public bodies; an act that presupposes appropriate adjustments to the relevant institutional framework. Thus, it becomes obvious that the participation of citizens in coproduction activities requires some - at least general - legal basis. Despite the fact that the law is not necessary (probably not even possible) to provide an institutional framework that will cover each and every case of coproduction, nevertheless some basic provisions should be made to that effect. These, may include the allocation of powers and responsibilities to the participants in the service production process (citizens and PSO officials), as well as a clear legal authorization covering the allocation of any type of public resources to the respective coproduction activities (ibid).

Along these lines, Meijer (2016), in view of the new situation taking shape in the public space as a result of the implementation of the coproduction paradigm, detects an incompatibility between the existing institutional structures, on the one hand, and the new distribution of roles and obligations in the Citizen-State dipole, on the other. Therefore, he argues that the application of the coproduction paradigm poses serious challenges to the existing institutional structures, forcing the State to perform corresponding adjustments of the respective legal framework in various policy areas, such as for example, the provision of legal protection to citizen-coproducers (Aubin and Bornstein, 2012).

Furthermore, for Joshi and Moore (2004) it is clear that coproduction blurs accountability schemes based on precise boundaries that separate the public from the private. Along these lines, Verschuere, Brandsen and Pestoff pose the question: "(...) who can the users hold accountable when the users themselves are part of the production process?" (2013, p. 618). The fact is that coproduction in no way relieves the institutional responsibility of the State for the provision of public services; thus, the participation of citizens cannot be used as an argument on the part of competent PSO in the event of failure to provide public services in the quality and/or quantity defined by the law.

According to Szescito (2018), another element related to the legitimization basis of coproduction is the safeguarding of the basic values of the service delivery system. The provision of public services is governed by basic principles that ensure universal and equal access to all citizens. And despite the fact that there is no inherent attribute of coproduction that contradicts

the preservation of the above principles, numerous references to relevant problems are made in the respective scientific literature. For example, there have been references to the fact that the majority of the participants in coproduction activities come from wealthy communities, are themselves well-off, educated, and belong to non-minority groups of the population. They are, therefore, in an advantageous position to take charge of the participatory decision-making process or to enjoy services that require greater user involvement (Verschuere et al., 2012).

Addressing the issues raised by the principles of universality and equality must be taken very seriously into account when legislating in the field of public service provision. Especially in the case of coproduction, any political or legislative initiatives aimed at the implementation of public service coproduction activities should always be accompanied by a relevant social impact assessment study. Thus, any negative consequences in respect of the universality and equality regarding service provision will be identified and addressed a priori, so that all the necessary regulatory measures are taken in time to manage the relevant risks.

8. Epilogue

Concluding, it should be noted once more that the paradigm of coproduction, notwithstanding its virtues, is to be considered by no means a panacea, capable of healing all the maladies and shortcomings of the administration systems worldwide. It does have a "dark" side and all kinds of difficulties and obstacles may emerge in the way of its implementation. Also, serious consideration has been raised regarding both the paradigm's effectiveness for the creation of public value and social capital, as well as its impact on the preservation of a balance between representative and participatory democracy in the context of modern public governance systems.

However, if all that is taken into account at the design phase, through appropriate legal arrangements and careful planning, coproduction has the potential to become what Osborne et al. (2018, p. 18) characterize as one of the cornerstones of reform policies worldwide; a valuable tool for reforming public service delivery systems, as well as for the planning and efficient production of public services; a means of leveraging additional resources in the provision public services; an answer to the question of the democratic deficit; and finally, a path leading to active citizenship and the activation of society.

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