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Published online: 25 Feb 2021.

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Neighbourhood collaboration in co-production: state-resourced responsiveness or state-retrenched responsibilisation?

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ABSTRACT

The co-production of public services involving service users and their communities is a form of collaboration of increasing appeal to governments around the world. Its increasing popularity has resulted in critical debates about its collaborative nature, in particular whether co-production assists the state to withdraw from service provision through prompting self-reliance. The research focuses on how the local state engages in co-production with neighbourhood-based communities of place under austerity, drawing from analysis of the discourses and practices of collaboration in the city of Cardiff, Wales. Problematizing how the term is understood and enacted by different actors sheds light on the power relations entailed and the scope for these to be challenged with the development of new ways of working. The research reveals radical potentialities in the case of timebanking, a form of co-production founded in reciprocal exchange. But findings underline that co-production entails a redistribution of responsibility and risk in managing and delivering services from the state to civil society, and from the local to the neighbourhood, revalorized as a site for community self-provisioning of formerly public services. The imperative that governments and communities pursuing co-production develop shared understandings of its precise nature, use and consequences is made clear.

Introduction

Collaboration between government, the private and third (voluntary and community) sectors in order to make, manage and deliver public policy is a defining feature of contemporary public management. Collaboration is seen as an important means of tackling complex societal problems that transcend professional, organizational and sectoral boundaries, often requiring the engagement of local stakeholders to improve policy design and implementation. The co-production of public services involving users and their communities exemplifies the "resource mobilization" of collaboration (Bovaird 2007). Its putative promise of "more for less" has helped to garner co-production

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attention from governments and communities in countries including the UK, Germany, the US and Australia (Alford and Yates 2016).

The rise of collaborative working is reflected in research on its multi-sector, -scalar and -organisational governance arrangements in different contexts. This includes consideration of the extent to which local governance has shifted from a hierarchical to network mode of coordination and the scope for networked community governance (Stoker 2004, 2011). But Stoker (2011, 25) emphasises the tensions in "finding the organizational space for a new system", affirmed by Sullivan et al. (2013), who argue that collaboration has been deployed in pursuit of neoliberal political projects, influenced by new public management and latterly by the strictures of austerity. Under austerity "the local" has been framed as a key site of social responsibility and civic engagement (Featherstone et al. 2012, 177), manifested in funding cuts and the downsizing of public service provision whilst seeking to prompt the self-provision of (formerly public) services in communities able to do so. Thus through promoting the values of citizen self-reliance, the state is reframed as a facilitator of self-provisioning rather than as a service provider.

A common definition of "co-production" deployed in the UK is "delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours" (Boyle and Harris 2009). There is broad agreement that co-production is particularly relevant at the local and particularly neighbourhood level "closest to citizens", with health, education, environment, safety and welfare prominent policy areas (OECD 2011); as well as being about the direct role that citizens can play in service provision (Brandsen and Honingh 2016). But despite theoretical development, the co-production field is rife with disagreement about meanings and its nature and consequences are poorly understood (Alford and Yates 2016). A significant research gap relates to the collaborative nature of co-production in practice, drawn from examination of how it is interpreted and deployed in different contexts. This research seeks to contribute to ongoing critical debates regarding whether co-production is a form of collaboration which constitutes shared or self-provisioned ways of delivering services by focusing on discourses about co-production and how it has been enacted under austerity in the city of Cardiff in the UK.

Recognition of the confusion that arises, the varied social constructions of "co-production" and its links to a range of practices, is fundamental to the analysis. To examine how the local state engages in co-production with communities under austerity, it is necessary to recognize that co-production does not necessarily involve direct state-citizen interactions in the act of "producing". If co-production is conceptualized as "the contribution of time and effort to the delivery of public services by service users and citizens, *prompted by* or in concert with public sector organizations" (Alford and Yates 2016, 159; emphasis added), the extent to which the local state uses co-production to "prompt" self-provisioning amongst citizen-users (responsibilisation) rather than to engage in resourced service delivery "in concert" with them (responsiveness) can be considered. Problematizing how the term is understood and enacted by different actors sheds light on the power relations entailed and the scope for these to be challenged with the development of new ways of working under the aegis of co-production.

Analysis of how the local state engages in co-production with neighbourhood-based communities of place as a consequence of austerity is structured as follows. First the use of the neighbourhood as a site for state-society collaboration is considered before

explaining the research approach, which draws from data gathered in Cardiff. Discourses and practices of collaboration in the city are then examined, before focusing on the "co-production" form of collaboration and how it is being enacted in the city's neighbourhoods, with timebanking as a key example of co-production's radical potentialities. However, these potentialities are not realized in terms of challenging the state-society power relations of the city's governance. The analysis concludes that co-production entails a redistribution of responsibility and risk in managing and delivering services from the state to civil society, and from the local down to the neighbourhood, which has been revalorized as a site for community self-provisioning of what were formerly public services. A key lesson for other localities is that governments and communities pursuing co-production need to develop shared understandings of its precise nature, use and consequences.

Neighbourhood collaboration

The neighbourhood forms the frontline of state-society relationships as it is "where people live" and where they are most likely to consume public services. Third sector organizations (TSOs) based in the neighbourhood work with their particular communities of place but also act as intermediary organizations between the neighbourhood and the local state. They operate in an "interstitial space" which can be created by government invitation, inaction or "initiative catalyst" (Chaskin and Greenberg 2015, 251). Therefore, though intermediaries are in a potentially powerful position, they are easily marginalized by more powerful government actors changing collaborative arrangements or ending initiatives.

In the UK, government-initiated neighbourhood initiatives have yielded plentiful opportunities for the study of collaborative arrangements within local governance (Foley and Martin 2000; Beatty et al. 2010) and the power relations entailed (Whitehead 2003; Davies 2007). The importance of receptive institutional frameworks, community engagement and individual agency (Hendriks and Tops 2005) in gaining neighbourhood-level outcomes is recognized. Keast (2011, 299) highlights that top-down approaches need to be combined with "co-operative relations on the ground". These dynamics have implications for the individuals operating at and across the neighbourhood and local scales, who need to be able to operate both hierarchically and horizontally, balancing vertical practices of direction and control with horizontal practices such as "getting 'buy in' and … energising and mobilizing resources" (Keast 2011, 228). The collaborative management literature emphasises the skills individuals need, such as the ability to resolve conflicts and build mutual trust (Williams 2002, 2011; Ferlie et al. 2011) but also to understand the social constructions of partners and define issues in relation to their values and interests (Getha-Taylor 2008).

The literature highlights the role and agency of particular individuals based in public and third sector organizations: the local government "network manager"; and the officers of neighbourhood-based TSOs. A network manager is a key public official whose role is sponsored by and enacted under the guidance of the local state (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). A network manager's activities (Guarneros-Meza and Martin 2016) are usefully understood in terms of operating at and across different scales: practices of coaching (strengthening partnerships); advocacy (providing vertical channels of communication

between scales); and enforcement (seeking to impose practices, targets and performance management systems devised at higher scales). At the lower scale, neighbourhood-based TSO officers act as intermediaries between the neighbourhood and local government. Neighbourhood-based (and ideally resident, strengthening horizontal links) TSO officers encapsulate aspects of the "everyday maker" (Bang and Sørensen 1999) or community member who can "forge and nurture co-productive coalitions" with government as well as the broader community. Though TSO officers are not the public officials seeking to connect communities with public resources and services which Durose (2011) describes as "civic entrepreneurs", this description does capture TSO officers' potential creativity in identifying needs and developing solutions. However, TSO officers are not only involved in seeking to increase state responsiveness to their communities, but increasingly are engaged in seeking to responsibilise their communities by enrolling them into the provision of (former public) services.

Under the onslaught of austerity the neighbourhood has been revalorized not only as a site for government intervention but as one of community self-provisioning (Davies and Pill 2012; Bailey and Pill 2015). Focusing on the collaborative activities of "co-production", discourses and practices derived from interviews with, amongst others, the network manager and neighbourhood-based TSO officers, along with documentary review, are examined. The analysis enables consideration of the power relations inherent in how the local state engages in co-production with communities under austerity and whether in practice, co-production constitutes shared or self-provisioned forms of service delivery. It thus contributes towards wider debates about the collaborative nature of co-production in practice by addressing the critical 'responsiveness or responsibilisation?' question through an insightful case example.

Research approach

The analysis draws from research conducted in Cardiff, capital of Wales (population 361,000) undertaken as part of a broader comparative investigation into the effects of austerity on forms of participation in urban governance (Davies and Blanco 2017). The initial research comprised a combination of documentary review of policy documents and qualitative research conducted in two principal phases (spring/ summer 2014; and spring 2015). "Co-production" was selected as the focus for the current analysis due to its prominence in the initial research, entailing a further documentary review and a subsidiary phase of interviews (winter 2017). In total, 31 interviews were conducted, fifteen in the first phase, fourteen in the second and two in the third. In total across all research phases 23 respondents were interviewed, comprising: a Welsh government assembly member; a senior Welsh government officer; four city councillors; three senior city government officers, including the city's network manager; ten third sector organization (TSO) officers, including five neighbourhood-based TSO officers; and four citizen activists. Six respondents (two councillors, the council's network manager, two TSO officers and a citizen activist) were interviewed in both the first and second phases to illuminate the progress and effects of austerity in the city, and the same two TSO officers were interviewed for a third time in December 2017 to gain a further, sector-specific update. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured instrument, which covered topics of relevance to examining change in state-society relationships

and collaborative practices under austerity, namely partnership working, policy areas, informal and formal forms of citizen participation, and levels of engagement and influence. The interviews, conducted with ethical approval and for which informed consent was gained, were recorded and transcribed. This analysis re-reads and supplements the interview and documentary data using thematic coding to explore discourses and practices of co-production, and how these articulate in terms of notions of responsiveness (shared service delivery) or responsibilisation (self-provisioning).

Collaborative discourses and practices

An examination of discourses and practices of collaboration in Cardiff informs understanding of the progress and effects of austerity on local governance and establishes the background to co-production in the city. The analysis makes use of the four discourses used to justify collaborative endeavours (including co-production) identified by Sullivan et al. (2013). All four discourses are readily discerned at both the local, city-scale and at the sub-local, neighbourhood scale in Cardiff; as are the later amendments made to these discourses to continue to appeal to a broad range of stakeholders under the strictures of austerity. Each of the four discourses is explained below, along with an examination of how they are manifested in policy and practice in Cardiff, drawing from analysis of documentary and interview data using the four discourses as the coding frame (summarized in Table 1).

Efficiency

This discourse focuses on the most efficient use of resources through cross-sectoral partnerships. It has been deployed by political actors in part to further neoliberal strategies and practices and amended under austerity to emphasise financial prudence and deficit reduction. In the UK, the emphasis on engaging civil society as a partner in promoting local community well-being within a mixed economy of service provision has been maintained under austerity. But emphasis on the local is as much the result of

Table 1. Collaborative discourses and practices in Cardiff.

	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Responsiveness
Discourse	Efficient resource use via e.g. partnership	Dealing with wicked issues	Improving service design and delivery interactions between citizen-users and providers
Practice in Cardiff	Cardiff Partnership (2007)	- Cardiff Partnership - Priority outcomes (2010) - Neighbourhood teams (2011)	- Cardiff Partnership - Communities First (Welsh Government) initiative (2001)
Under austerity	Financial prudence/ deficit reduction	Organizational reconfigurations/ strategies e.g commissioning	**Responsibilisation** Citizen-users take on more responsibility for their own well-being
Practice in Cardiff	- £100 m cuts over 3 years from 2014/15 (annual budget £585 m 2014/15) - Budget priorities consultation	- Reworked Cardiff Partnership - Neighbourhood partnerships (2013)	- Relaunched Communities First programme contracted to TSOs (2011) - 'Stepping Up' e.g. finding alternate funding; community asset transfer; voluntarism in service delivery (2015) - Timebanking (2012)

"savage public spending cuts and the need to externalize responsibility for performance failure" as a "principled commitment to more autonomous local governance" (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012, 38).

A time lag in cuts feeding through from London to Wales meant that it was not until 2014/15 that reductions in the Welsh government budget necessitated severe budget cuts for local authorities. Cardiff Council sought cuts of some £100 million over the following three years. To put this in context, the council's overall net budget for 2014/15 was £585 million. The council commenced a "priorities consultation" on the 2014/ 15 budget as the "shortfall will undoubtedly change the way we are shaped and operate" (Cardiff Council 2013a). During first phase interviews, all respondents were aware of the heightened need for some form of collaboration and the efficiency discourse predominated. The network manager explained "there's no finances to deliver some of these things … we need to look at how we can partnership deliver between communities and public institutions". A councillor (and cabinet member) explained collaboration "in terms of saving money and getting better outcomes".

Effectiveness

This discourse promotes collaboration as a way of dealing with wicked issues, supported by public service managers concerned with delivery and impact. In Wales the discourse was enacted with establishment by Welsh Government in 2007 of local service boards (LSBs, now called public services boards), presented as providing "the joined-up leadership required to help overcome recurrent and difficult problems that can only be tackled through collaboration and partnership" (Welsh Government 2007). Cardiff's LSB, the Cardiff Partnership, is led by Cardiff Council and comprises public sector executive officers and third sector representatives. Its city-wide strategy is presented as one which ensures each partner co-ordinates resources around seven objectives claimed to be the ones "that matter most to the people of Cardiff" (Cardiff Council 2010), with "needs assessment and priority areas" enabling development of specifications for services in light of the outcomes sought. Division of the city into six "neighbourhoods" was positioned as a "delivery mechanism for the strategic policy agenda", each assigned a (virtual rather than dedicated) multi-public agency team (Pill 2011).

Under austerity, the effectiveness discourse has been recast to focus on organizational reconfigurations, emphasising strategies such as shared services and joint commissioning. In Cardiff, this has manifested via the partnership model, cast by the council's network manager as "the foundation" through which the city's local state actors have sought to rationalize and reorganize public services, finding a systematic way to slim down operational systems through collaborative procurement, outsourcing or contracting services from TSOs. Emphasis on the neighbourhood increased, with neighbourhood teams tasked to try and co-ordinate with the efforts of neighbourhood-based TSOs and informal community groups via creation of neighbourhood partnerships (Cardiff Council 2013b). These were seen by the council's network manager as enabling efficiencies, "we can actually see who is doing what in a neighbourhood … it has shone the light about the duplication, the lack of coordination".

Responsiveness to responsibilisation

Championed by third sector interests, the responsiveness discourse is especially pertinent to the focus on neighbourhood-based co-production. It formed a central tenet of Communities First (CF), Welsh Government's "flagship" neighbourhood initiative to tackle deprivation (launched 2001 in neighbourhoods identified using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation). The initiative sought to develop approaches to changing service delivery in deprived neighbourhoods, drawing on the notion that local people are best placed to understand their needs and, together with local service providers, to consider how services should be changed to make them more effective and efficient (Welsh Government 2006). In 2011 the initiative was relaunched to target fewer, larger "clusters" of deprivation (with populations of 10-15,000). Cardiff Council was innovative in contracting neighbourhood-based TSOs to manage its four clusters rather than maintaining their management and associated staffing in-house.

Under austerity the responsiveness discourse is increasingly deployed by the state to emphasise how citizen-users can take on more responsibility for their own well-being (Sullivan et al. 2013), underpinned by the neoliberal shift from welfare provision based upon collective risk towards individual risk and responsibility (Clarke and Newman 2012). It is expressed in increased emphasis on self-provisioning. Given the state retrenchment of austerity, the motivation to inculcate such practices (and invoke moral and social responsibilities to do so) is clear. In the initial stages of austerity, UK central government called upon a range of legacies to legitimate the shift to self-provisioning. Some legacies, such as that of civic associationalism, are longstanding; others are more recent, such as the role of civil society in promoting the well-being of local communities (Davies and Pill 2012; Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). These legacies incorporate neighbourhood initiatives fostered in earlier cycles of development and regeneration (Newman 2014). In Wales following devolution in 1999, efforts were made to sustain legacies of welfarism despite tight Westminster control over finances, reflected in collectivist policies such as free medical prescriptions. But under austerity Welsh legacies of mutual aid have been invoked as part of efforts to expand self-provisioning. In the words of the Minister for Public Services, "in Wales, our traditions of community engagement in finding cooperative and mutual solutions enabled us to pioneer new approaches" (Andrews 2015).

In Cardiff, the responsiveness discourse was clearly extended to include responsibilisation. Policy documents and discourse emphasised the need for communities to "step up", including attempts to secure alternate funding sources, transfer of assets to communities, and community self-provision of services (Cardiff Partnership 2016). The network manager's role encompassed instigating and guiding significant changes described as "commissioning or co-producing or inviting communities to step up". As she explained, "it's about encouraging community groups to actually take some ownership … but the council also needs to help support that … enabling people to take some responsibility".

Austerity accelerated the city council's use of the Cardiff Partnership model. At the neighbourhood level, service delivery was offloaded to TSOs (aided by the council's transfer of CF initiative management) and informal community groups, assisted by the recasting of the city's six neighbourhood teams as a mechanism to co-ordinate state and non-state activities at sub-local level. Thus neighbourhood-based TSOs were

enrolled into service delivery in ways that included voluntarism, increasing community self-reliance. The Cardiff Partnership therefore exemplifies an organizational form that furthers the political project of shifting (public) service provision from the state to civil society (Newman and Clarke 2009, 94).

Cultural performance

In contrast to the preceding instrumental perspectives, Sullivan et al. (2013) identify a further discourse through which political and social norms are communicated, which highlights the place and cultural specificity of forms of collaboration. Discursive distinctions between England and Wales (such as the quickly discarded English policy rhetoric of the "Big Society" and the invocation of traditions of community engagement by the Welsh Minister for Public Services) illustrate this in a UK context. The cultural performance perspective illuminates the capacity through collaboration to mediate and constitute social values and norms, such as exhorting communities in Cardiff to "step up" and take responsibility. But variance amongst partners' social constructions of their activities not only underlines the importance of framing issues in ways that align with partner values (Getha-Taylor 2008) such as invoking community engagement, but also indicates scope for expressing alternative values and norms which do not conform with those of dominant partners. "Co-production" is subject to varied social constructions and is linked to a range of practices, some of which may conform with state understandings and some of which may seek to transgress these.

Discourses of co-production

The analysis first problematizes how the term is understood by different actors (national and city government elected members and officers; TSO officers; and citizen activists). Given its varied social constructions, understandings of the concept and associated practices are elucidated from the responses of those interviewed rather than being prompted by providing a standard definition.

The diversity of interpretations of "co-production" was revealed in interviews, summed up by a Welsh Government official's comment that "people are using the term in different ways and there's no broadly agreed understanding of what we're talking about". There was a lack of understanding of what the term means other than being related in some way to "partnership working" or perhaps "collaboration". Despite a council policy paper containing a definition of co-production as "working with communities and citizens rather than just delivering services to them" (Cardiff Council 2013b, 27), two of the four councillors interviewed made it clear they lacked understanding, one commenting, "will it improve things, will it change things? Nobody is quite sure. As councillors we are struggling with it. People get the idea of working in partnership".

Whilst a councillor explained that "co-production ideas [are] coming from the Welsh Government", respondents (including a Welsh Government official) expressed frustration about the lack of clarity regarding definitions and approaches:

> I don't think anything could capture Welsh Government policy on co-production at the moment because I don't think we know what it is … there are a range of meanings with a

fair degree of common ground, but there's also a good deal of divergence … sometimes it's just code for a much more general collaboration and desire to work in partnership (Welsh Government official).

Another respondent flagged a change in discourse rather than in practice with regard to "co-production":

It's out there in the world, and it isn't a reality in most cases. Certainly the Welsh Government housing department uses it all the time, and what they really mean is that they'll talk to a couple of people that they've talked to for the last 10 years, and think that that is co-production with the sector (Social housing provider officer)

The cultural performance discourse (Sullivan et al. 2013) was evident in a co-production specialist TSO officer's recognition that co-production aligns with "Welsh traditions of co-operativism and mutualism". But the officer also acknowledged, as did a Welsh Government official, that "we have much less co-production in Wales than we sometimes speak as though we have". And intra-political party divisions about the use of the term were highlighted. The specialist TSO officer identified "goodwill towards the concept of co-production", citing the Welsh Minister for Health's attempts to include it in the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014), "so it sits there in statutory legislation". But this was contrasted with the Minister for Public Services' assertion that "Wales was doing co-production decades before academics invented a term for it" (Andrews 2015) as part of his avowed unwillingness to codify it in legislation.

Those respondents revealed as relative "experts" about co-production, given their knowledge and/or experience of the concept and practice, tended to interpret co-production as citizens working in partnership with public service providers (the responsiveness discourse):

It's about understanding need as defined by the service users and citizens, and developing services that are actually best placed to meet that need, but in a way that actually challenges traditional methods of delivery (Third sector peak body officer)

A very particular way of working with communities to design and deliver their services with them … for me a community setting is an essential feature (Welsh Government official).

An officer of a specialist co-production TSO had a more refined interpretation which emphasised the distinction between the responsiveness and responsibilisation discourses:

The danger … is the difference between substitutive and transformative co-production and about whether or not the shift in power will be - what we're trying to achieve will be simply putting people where state employees once were as the state rolls back (Specialist TSO officer).

And a neighbourhood-based TSO officer contrasted with other experts by defining co-production in terms of "a community organization [rather than public agency] working with the local community". This interpretation goes beyond asserting the intermediary role of neighbourhood-based TSOs to suggest that the local state can be supplanted, upending local state-society relationships but also expressing the responsibilisation of citizens in the absence of the local state. In contrast, other non-expert respondents reiterated concerns about how TSOs and citizens can engage in what was perceived as a local state-led process:

> There's no clarity as to quite what Cardiff's offer is around co-production and therefore what people can actually bring to that, contribute in terms of influence or delivery (Third sector peak body officer).

Respondents shared concerns about the viability of the collaborative relationships between residents, council officers and councillors implied under co-production. But views differed on where blocks to realizing co-production lay, related to different perceptions of power relations between the local state and citizens, and their capacity to co-produce. One councillor expressed doubt about the ability of council officers to "take this on board" as "they're not receptive when from the grassroots feelings come up as to what they should be doing". The councillor described the resentment expressed by other councillors towards an informal community group which has "got council services to turn round, through their own efforts, with no effort whatsoever from the local councillors". These concerns were echoed by a neighbourhood-based TSO officer:

> The whole political process definitely messes it up, unless if you've got good local councillors it can be really helpful, but generally councillors, they're democratically elected, they have a right to represent the community but sometimes they think they're the only people that can represent the community, or take part in the discussion. That can be horrendously destructive in terms of people doing things together (Neighbourhood-based TSO officer).

In contrast, other respondents (a neighbourhood-based TSO officer and a citizen activist) expressed the corollary concern. They sympathized with why council officers might find working with residents "uncomfortable" as "local communities don't always know what's best", especially those of the deprived neighbourhoods subject to the CF initiative, described as "communities that very often are not functioning properly anyway" and are perceived as lacking the "well-informed" residents deemed necessary for co-production.

Responsiveness or responsibilisation

In examining in practice how the local state engages in co-production with communities under austerity, the analysis considers the point at which co-production is enacted on a continuum from being resourced by the state (responsiveness) to being resourced by citizens (responsibilisation). Thus co-production is considered in terms of citizens working with public service providers in contrast to citizens' self-provisioning of formerly public services.

The two-phase nature of the principal interviews enables consideration of how the concept has been disseminated and practice progressed between the first and second year of major public sector spending cuts in the city.

The research revealed various examples of co-production involving the neighbourhood-based TSOs, ranged at various points along a continuum between public sector funded and citizen-resourced service delivery - as represented by joint council-community service provision (responsiveness) and community self-provisioning (responsibilisation). Service commissioning practices were towards the responsiveness end of the continuum. One TSO officer cast their role as "a point of influence" on the commissioning process, another saw commissioning as providing an opportunity for their TSO to deliver services "with a community-grounded approach". The chief officer of the

neighbourhood-based TSO regarded by other respondents as the exemplar for co-production practice in Cardiff gave two examples towards the responsibilisation end of the continuum. The first example was the TSO gaining council agreement for community volunteers to be working alongside council staff in running a new "community hub" (combining the local library, housing office and other services). The other was school holiday activity provision for children and young people, now largely self-provisioned by informal community groups assisted by the TSO after public provision by the council's youth service had been cut.

Of particular relevance to the focus on neighbourhood-based community self-provisioning is that the voluntarism of the preceding two examples was underpinned through use of what the specialist TSO termed "the currency for the age of austerity", timebanking. Timebanking is regarded as a form of co-production. But it contrasts with other forms given its basis in what its founder, Edgar Cahn, terms "the core economy" of community, family and democracy (Cahn 2000). As such it highlights the importance of reciprocal exchange and in so doing poses a challenge to formal economies. It can therefore be regarded as a transgressive deployment of the cultural performance collaborative discourse, harnessing the strong appeal of community to express alternative social norms regarding how people's time is valued. It challenges conventional understandings by imposing equivalence in the quality and quantity of labour performed. Under its "one hour equals one hour" principle, enrolled neighbourhood residents can earn and spend "timecredits".

However, despite its radical underpinnings, timebanking's inherent self-provisioning ethos aligns with austerity's emphasis on the state role's as facilitator rather than service provider. The approach was championed by UK central government (Cabinet Office 2011), which funded a major third sector proponent (Nesta) operating across England and Wales. Thus the critique that timebanking's association with co-production diminishes its radicalism as it is easily assimilated into political projects (Gregory 2014) is affirmed. The specialist TSO in Cardiff agreed, "timecredits [were] sufficiently apolitical … it was something the Tories could seize on". How the officer described the TSO's advocacy for timebanking further underlines the validity of the cultural performance discourse, in terms of collaboration being used to communicate (different) political and social norms between Wales and England:

> We were talking to a Labour government in Cardiff [and] a Conservative government in Westminster and we were having to nuance our language … Before [timebanking founder Cahn] came to Wales he met with one of the architects of the [English policy] 'Big Society' … [Cahn] was told as soon as he crossed the border, do not mention the 'Big Society' … you've not only got the political dimension, you've also got the national dimension … we always had to step quite carefully in terms of not being painted into a corner in a political sense (Specialist TSO officer).

In Cardiff, the approach has been championed by the specialist co-production TSO (a beneficiary of Whitehall funding via Nesta) in collaboration with one of the deprived neighbourhood-based TSOs charged with managing a CF cluster. But the important role played by the council's network manager was also clear. Whilst the approach operates through resident reciprocal exchange of equivalent hours of providing a service, "spend" options are initially underpinned by "corporate partners", notably the city

council, enabling exchange of timecredits at council facilities such as swimming pools not necessarily within the neighbourhood. As the scheme develops, spend options are augmented by "community spend opportunities", or community self-provisioned activities, reducing the need for public sector support over time. The scheme, Wales' largest, is regarded as a success by its proponents (with 1,000 individual and 85 group members in the community). As the neighbourhood-based TSO chief officer explained, "community spend opportunities, stuff that's created in the community, has started to overtake corporate spend". In the words of the specialist TSO, "we're starting to get tantalizing glimpses of transformative change … we're starting to see citizens taking more of an active role in co-producing the future". The scope for change from below that challenges local state-society relationships was recognized by other TSOs, one describing the neighbourhood-based TSO at the vanguard of timebanking as "punch[ing] very much above their weight … they've made themselves strategically quite a big player".

Tensions were clear given timebanking's alignment with the responsibilisation as well as responsiveness discourses of co-production. By its adherents, timebanking is seen as able to support and network the transition to community self-provisioning - but alongside public sector provision. The specialist TSO stressed it is a "way of making public services more responsive, more effective, more citizen-centred" and should not be "a way of replacing frontline services", despite practice examples indicating that this was the case. In the second round of interviews, conducted a year later as spending cuts progressed across the city, reiteration of concerns about the ability to maintain this important distinction were justified. One example was the council's network manager (re-interviewed) description of new timebanking activities in another CF cluster as "working with some of the day centres which have had cut-backs" to provide volunteers for delivery of seniors' day care, making clear that voluntarism was replacing rather than complementing state provision.

In rolling out timebanking, as "we've now got all four CF clusters signed up", the skills deployed by the network manager combined coaching and advocacy practices with those of enforcement (Guarneros-Meza and Martin 2016), highlighting the power of the local state to guide the actions of neighbourhood-based TSOs in their communities:

> I would like to say that we've [the council] played a big role in that in terms of we've pushed it … we've actively pushed the other two clusters to take up timebanking. There was one cluster that wasn't playing and I was like, you have to do this, we want to get that spread (Council network manager).

The use of the CF programme to roll out timebanking indicated the scope to connect "local knowledge and action with a wider network" and thus the potential to demarcate "space for a new system" (Stoker 2011, 23–25). Certainly the Welsh Government official explained that the CF programme has "potential to provide a home for co-production" but clarified that the small-scale practice examples were "very much the exception rather than the rule … we've got a long way to go to mainstream". Successful realization of extended timebanking beyond the CF neighbourhoods was fraught with difficulty, not least due to the network manager's relative lack of enforcement levers beyond the CF initiative. The network manager had encouraged the specialist TSO in its ambitions for Cardiff to "be a timebanking city". The TSO's discussions with social housing providers in this regard affirmed the varied and conflicting social constructions (Getha-Taylor 2008) of co-production, as described by the TSO officer:

> I don't really know why they brought us in. I think it just sounded like a nice idea. They had this vague notion that they wanted to engage more tenants in the delivery of housing programmes. But their concept of engagement was very shallow … timebanking does not necessarily equal co-production. You can incentivise citizen participation with a community currency. That doesn't mean to say that that participation will go any deeper than consultation (Specialist TSO officer).

Overall, Sullivan et al.'s (2013) assertion that the efficiency discourse of collaboration predominates, influencing how effectiveness and responsiveness are constituted, is borne out:

> People want to do co-production for free and people also want to do co-production because it's cost saving, and I think it can save costs over time, but there is an upfront investment. It's a massive one. In repurposing services that have been doing the same thing for 50 years, that requires training. It requires networking. It requires the building of a base of knowledge. It requires advocacy and lobbying (Specialist TSO officer).

Under austerity, the responsiveness discourse has shifted to responsibilisation. In the second round of interviews, citizen activists who were prompted on their views of "co-production", commented that it was "a farce", as organizations have "to lose members of their team because of the new model of working". Another activist stressed the importance of "defining the boundaries [to the council] and saying, we will do this and we won't do that". But in practice, it was these boundaries between state-resourced responsiveness and state-retrenched responsibilisation which were most effectively being crossed.

Since conclusion of the initial, two-phase research, Welsh Government announced the phasing out of the CF initiative during 2017/18 after 17 years of operation. Withdrawal of such "initiative catalyst" (Chaskin and Greenberg 2015) undoubtedly compromises any ability to challenge power relations gained by neighbourhood-based TSOs within the interstitial space between state and civil society. It also forecloses the network manager's ability to advocate for and enforce development of forms of co-production supported by the initiative. Co-production was seen by one CF-managing neighbourhood-based TSO as part of its ability to "survive beyond CF" but the forms enacted in Cardiff, including the most innovative expression in terms of timebanking, still relied to a greater or lesser extent on state supports including the skills of the network manager. In the final year of initiative operation, the particular TSO was still receiving nearly 70% of its funding from CF, despite efforts to diversify and self-generate funding sources via social enterprise approaches. And the network manager, widely well-regarded, is no longer in post having left the council.

A further, subsidiary research phase comprising interviews with two TSO officers interviewed in the previous phases enabled exploration of how their organizations continue to be affected, and practices changed, with the continued roll-out of austerity. The council's £100 million funding gap for the three-year period to March 2017 was replicated for the following three years to March 2020 (Cardiff Council 2016). Self-provisioning remains in the ascendance, with the neighbourhood-based TSO taking on the risks and responsibilities via community asset transfer of three former council-owned buildings. State-resourced responsiveness continues to be in abeyance, with the "not functional" neighbourhood partnership mechanism having "petered out". Commissioning,

especially of well-being and health services, continues to provide opportunities but tends to "turn into a procurement process" (i.e. lacking citizen-user and TSO engagement in identifying needs, service design and delivery). Previous frustrations had not resulted in greater clarity and formalized practice for co-production, which "never got beyond woolly" and lacked public sector leadership in "holding things accountable". The neighbourhood-based TSO explained that the use of timebanking continues, regarded as useful to "start things up", but stressed that established voluntary groups placed greater value on other forms of support from the TSO, such as assistance with managing risk. The ambition to upscale timebanking city-wide has not progressed given a "lack of appetite", though the specialist TSO reported its increased use in place-based health services, such as provision of recovery services and support to informal groups providing services for the elderly. Meanwhile, austerity proceeds - both interviewees stressed that council cuts are ongoing, though "there's nothing for them to pare back anymore", and the "system can't take much more strain".

Conclusion

The increasing prevalence of co-production as a form of local state-society collaboration has fuelled critical debates regarding the nature of such collaboration, especially about whether it is deployed to assist state withdrawal from service provision through prompting self-reliance. Examination of this question through analysis of the case of Cardiff revealed that forms of co-production in practice ranged along a continuum between state-resourced responsiveness and state-retrenched responsibilisation. But an overall redistribution of responsibility and risk in managing and delivering services, from the state to civil society, and down from the local to the neighbourhood scale, was clear. The inducement on the part of citizen-users to co-produce in these circumstances is to seek to retain a service. The inducement on the part of city government to prompt self-provisioning is the funding cuts of austerity, framed in this case as being imposed by a distant Westminster government.

The case of Cardiff enriches understanding of co-production in practice by drawing from longitudinal data to examine the progress and effects of austerity in the city. In the first phase (2014) those interviewed were attempting to respond to the strictures of funding cuts, and collaboration was seen as a way of combining resources to cope. By the second phase (2015) progress towards state retrenchment and responsibilisation was being enacted in structures and practices. The subsidiary third phase (2017) provides some insights from TSOs into the continued progress of austerity, as state supports for self-provisioning continued to reduce, including the 'further weakening', in the words of one respondent, of the city's third sector. Further Cardiff-based research is merited to continue to longitudinally track impacts, and to explore the fate of co-production in the city. Will it continue to be deployed in discourse as a way of helping to ease state withdrawal of services, or will it foster new ways of working at the neighbourhood scale which can challenge power differentials?

Research in the city to date shows that co-production under austerity acts to reinforce rather than challenge power differentials. The removal of direct (via neighbourhood initiative funding) and indirect (via network manager) local government support for neighbourhood-based TSOs points to the huge challenge of responsibilising

communities to deliver their own services, implying further entrenchment and widening of socio-spatial inequalities. Citizen-users need capacity to engage in self-provisioning, and these capacities are differentially distributed. Whilst some scope was indicated to rebalance local state-society power relations due to the challenge posed by timebanking and efforts to upscale it city-wide, its operation was enmeshed within a broader, managerial system (the Cardiff Partnership model) which instrumentalised TSOs to engage in co-production as responsibilisation.

The Cardiff case points to more generalizable findings regarding the effects of austerity that should be tested in other local contexts. In particular, further research is merited on the potentially transformative form of co-production that is timebanking in other settings to consider locally-specific discourses, uses and prospects.

Overall, key lessons for the governments and communities in many countries pursuing co-production in service delivery is the imperative to develop shared understandings of its precise nature, use and consequences; to ensure adequate state supports for implementation; and to be aware of its radical potentialities in terms of upending power relations, if it is understood and enacted in a way that genuinely combines the resources and capacities of the local state and civil society.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributor

Madeleine Pill's research into the theory and practice of governance and collaboration focuses on the urban/ local and neighbourhood levels. She is interested in the changing nature of state-society relationships and the scope for and limits to governments and citizens enabling or engendering change. Recently her research has considered the scope for and limits to state and citizen action at the local level in a context of austerity politics in the UK and US, the changing use of the neighbourhood scale amidst increased expectations of citizen self-help, shifts in local government policy and practice, and the roles played by other, non-state actors such as philanthropic foundations. She has published in Policy and Politics, Local Government Studies, Urban Studies, the Journal of Urban Affairs and the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.

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