

## **Debate: if citizen participation is so important, why has it not been achieved?**

Strokosch, Kirsty; Osborne, Stephen P.

*Published in:*  
Public Money and Management

*DOI:*  
[10.1080/09540962.2019.1654322](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2019.1654322)

*Publication date:*  
2020

*Document Version*  
Author accepted manuscript

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

### *Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Strokosch, K & Osborne, SP 2020, 'Debate: if citizen participation is so important, why has it not been achieved?', *Public Money and Management*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 8-10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2019.1654322>

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please view our takedown policy at <https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5179> for details of how to contact us.

**If citizen participation is so important, why has it not been achieved?**

**Kirsty Strokosch**

*Research Fellow*

*Centre for Service Excellence (CenSE)  
University of Edinburgh Business School  
29 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9JS  
[kirsty.strokosch@ed.ac.uk](mailto:kirsty.strokosch@ed.ac.uk)*

**Stephen Osborne**

*Professor of International Public Management*

*Centre for Service Excellence (CenSE)  
University of Edinburgh Business School,  
29 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9JS  
[stephen.osborne@ed.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.osborne@ed.ac.uk)*

## **Summary**

This paper aims to inspire debate on citizen participation and public management. It argues that the conceptualisation of participation within five main narratives of reform has constrained its capacity for transformative change in practice. Public Service Logic is then presented as an alternative narrative. It articulates a multi-dimensional model of participation through which value can be created (or destroyed) for public service users and society.

Keywords: participation; public services; reform; public service logic; value creation.

## **Introduction**

This short paper aims to inspire debate on citizen participation and public management. Since the 1960s, the conceptualisation of participation has evolved predominantly under five narratives of public service reform - New Public Administration (NPA), New Public Management (NPM), Public Value (PV), New Public Service (NPS) and New Public Governance (NPG). While featuring persuasively under some of these narratives, participation and its associated benefits have not been fully translated in practice (Roberts, 2004). The principal reason for this is the flawed conceptualisation of participation, which fails to articulate its multi-dimensional nature, its locus and its impact on value creation. Consequently, we present Public Service Logic (PSL) as an alternative narrative through which a more holistic conception of participation may be formulated.

## **The narratives of citizen participation**

Within the five narratives, participation has been framed as achieving increased democracy, service improvement and innovation (Frederickson, 1996; Dunston et al, 2009; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). However, as the pre-eminent narrative, **NPM** has been criticised for its disregard of citizen participation (e.g. Christensen and Laegreid, 2011). There are two predominant reasons for its absence. First, as an offshoot of the NPM, managerialism, which implies closed decision-making by experts (Ansell and Gash, 2007) overshadows direct participation. Second, the construction of citizens as consumers or ‘lay people’ whose role is mediated by public managers who, by contrast, are cast as powerful protagonists with the capacity to catalyse deep transformations (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004).

The four other narratives presented here have developed largely in response to the failings of NPM. **NPA** argued for the restoration of democratic values by placing citizens at the centre of decision-making processes (Frederickson, 1996). To achieve this, it called for power dispersal through structural changes such as decentralisation (Vigado, 2002; Nabatchi, 2012).

Through the seminal work of Mark Moore (1995), **PV** endorsed a more collaborative approach which aimed to create ‘public value’. Although different iterations of PV have developed (e.g. Stoker, 2006; Bryson et al, 2014) participation is a central construct, which entails political interaction through networks of deliberation between elected/appointed government officials and key stakeholders within civil society (Benington and Moore, 2011).

**NPS** takes a strong normative stance, calling for active citizenship as route to cohesive and inclusive societies (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Here, the NPM idea of self-interested consumers is expanded to a shared vision of ‘public interest’ (deLeon and Denhardt, 2000). The role of government is also altered; they ‘serve rather than steer’ and public managers are positioned as ‘transformative leaders’ who negotiate, enable and facilitate participation (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

Within **NPG**, and latterly ‘collaborative governance’, new structures and spaces of influence have been described as increasing participation among a plurality of actors (Sorenson and Torfing, 2018). Service users have been re-conceptualised as co-producers working in a horizontal, interactive and co-operative relationship with public service providers, primarily during service delivery (Meijer, 2016).

## **The challenges for participation**

Despite featuring within each of the narratives, in practice participation has continued to be consigned to the periphery of public service production (Roberts, 2004). There are four

reasons for this. First, public services are predominantly understood within a *linear model* of service production, where production and consumption are defined as distinct processes and actors play discrete roles (i.e. public service organisations design and deliver services, which service users consume separately). Participative processes are thus appended to service production and are controlled by public service staff in terms of both process and impact. Second, the call for increased participation has been framed latterly as a *polemic* against NPM, but with limited evidence of efficacy. None of the narratives presented here have overcome the challenges of NPM which they critique, which is the preservation of closed decision-making. Third, *structural changes* such as decentralisation, deliberative processes and networks have failed to embed participation, which continues to be appended as an addition or alternative to the mainstream models. Finally, *power asymmetries* have been reinforced across the narratives, mainly through the differentiation of the roles public managers, stakeholders and service users play, with power generally being retained and exercised by the former two (Ansell and Gash, 2007).

### **Learning from Public Service Logic**

PSL centres on value, to individual service users, the public and society, the creation of which is the primary goal of public services (Alford, 2016). It proposes a *multi-dimensional model* of value creation (Osborne, 2018) which starts with the integral role of service users, but also extends to organisations and wider society which interact during the complex processes of value creation (Trischler and Charles, 2019). In a public service context, value creation is about five elements. These are (i) the impact of such services upon the satisfaction of service users with these services and upon their well-being, (ii) the service outcomes of public services, (iii) the effect of public services of the whole life experience of citizens, (iv) the ability of public services to create capacity in citizens for the future, and (v) the contribution of public services to creating value at the societal level (Osborne, 2020).

PSL differentiates the participation into four processes: two intrinsic roles that are unavoidable (co-construction and co-experience) and two extrinsic roles that can be designed into public services (co-production and co-design). Through this distinction, PSL offers a more holistic understanding of the role of public service users in value creation (and indeed its destruction also). Although it suggests, like the other narratives, that extrinsic forms of participation can be enabled, it contends that their application should be pragmatic and sensitive (Osborne et al, 2013). PSL also emphasises the extent to which participation can occur both as part of the production of public services and their use ('consumption'). By focusing on the supply and demand sides, participation can be articulated both as a means and an end to value creation. Moreover, by shifting the focus from single public service delivery to the creation of value, PSL offers a view of participation that is holistic rather than an 'end in itself'. Thus, the role of citizens is value creator (Gronroos and Voima, 2013). The role of professionals, by contrast, changes to value facilitator and co-creator; they can only make service offerings based upon a promise of value (Skalen et al, 2018; Gronroos, 2019). It is this holistic understanding of participation offered by PSL which enriches its conceptualisation and which will ultimately support its achievement in a way that previous public service reforms have failed to do.

## References

- Alford, J. (2016), Co-production, interdependence and publicness: extending public service dominant logic. *Public Management Review*, 18,5, p. 673-691.
- Ansell, C. and Gash, A. (2007), Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18, p. 543-571.
- Benington, J. (2011), From private choice to public value. In Benington, J. and Moore, M. (eds) *Public Value: Theory and Practice* (Palgrave MacMillan).
- Benington, J. and Moore, M. (2011), Public Value in complex and changing times. In Benington, J. and Moore, M. (eds) *Public Value: Theory and Practice* (Palgrave MacMillan).
- Bryson, J.M. and Crosby, B.C. and Bloomberg, L. (2014), Public value governance: moving beyond traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management. *Public Administration Review*, 74,4, p. 445-456.
- Christensen, T and Lægreid, P. (2011). Democracy and administrative policy: contrasting elements of New Public Management (NPM) and post- NPM. *European Policy Science Review*, 3,1, p. 125-146.
- deLeon, L. and Denhardt, R.B. (2000). The political theory of reinvention. *Public Administration Review*, 60,2, p. 89- 97.
- Denhardt, J.V. and Denhardt, R.B. (2015b). The New Public Service Revisited. *Public Administration Review*, 75,5, p. 664-672.
- Dunston, R., Lee, A., Boud, D., Brodie., P. and Chiarella, M. (2009). Co-production and health system reform – from re-imagining to re-making. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 68,1, p. 39-52.
- Frederickson, H.G. (1996). Comparing the reinventing government movement with the new public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 56,3, p. 263-270.
- Gronroos, C. (2019). Reforming public services: does service logic have anything to offer? *Public Management Review*, 21,5, p. 775-788
- Gronroos, C. and Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41,2, p. 133-150.
- Horner, L. and Hutton, W. (2011). Public value, deliberative democracy and the role of public managers. In Benington, J. and Moore, M. (eds) *Public Value: Theory and Practice* (Palgrave MacMillan).
- Meijer, A. (2016) ‘Coproduction as a structural transformation of the public sector’, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 29(6): 596-611.
- Nabatchi, T. (2012). Putting the “public” back in public values research: designing participation to identify and respond to values. *Public Administration Review*, 72,5, p. 699-708.
- Osborne, S.P. (2018). From public service-dominant logic to public service logic: are public service organizations capable of co-production and value co-creation? *Public Management Review*, 20,2, p. 225-231.
- Osborne, S. P. (2020). *Public Service Logic* (Routledge) [in press].

Osborne, S.P., Radnor, Z. and Nasi, G. (2013). A new theory for Public Service Management? Toward a (Public) Service Dominant Approach. *American Review of Public Administration*, 43,2, p. 135-158.

Pollitt, C. and Bouckaert, G. (2004). *Public Management Reform: A comparative analysis* (Oxford University Press).

Roberts, N. (2004). Public deliberation in an age of direct citizen participation. *American Review of Public Administration*. 34,4, p. 315-353.

Sorensen, E. and Torfing, J. (2018). The democratizing impact of governance networks: from pluralisation, via democratic anchorage, to interactive political leadership. *Public Administration*. 96,2, p. 1-16.

Stoker, G. (2006). Public Value Management: A new narrative for networked governance? *American Review of Public Administration*. 36,1, p. 41-57.

Thomsen, M.K. (2017). Citizen co-production: the influence of self-efficacy perception and knowledge of how to co-produce. *American Review of Public Administration*. 47,3, p. 340-353.

Trischler, J. and Charles, M. (2019). The application of service ecosystems lens to public policy analysis and design: exploring the frontiers. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*. 38,1, p. 19-35.

Vigoda, E. (2002). From responsiveness to collaboration: governance, citizens and the next generation of public administration. *Public Administration Review*. 62,5, p. 527-540.