

## Introduction

The relationship between public service delivery and citizen participation is complex and dynamic. The most compelling narratives on public service reforms of recent times – New Public Administration (NPA), New Public Management (NPM), Public Value (PV), New Public Service (NPS), and New Public Governance (NPG) – have investigated how citizen and user participation has been framed. However, despite the proposed advantages and the range of manners of participation across these narratives, they found that despite a plethora of rhetoric, participation has continued to be a chimaera, often relegated to the periphery of public service production (Osborne et al. 2022).

This Element offers an alternative theoretical narrative, grounded in Public Service Logic (PSL) theory that emphasizes participation not as an add-on or normative element of public service delivery but as a core component. Citizens and users play a central role in value creation for themselves and society. Public Service Logic refers to the underlying principles, values, and objectives that guide the design and delivery of public services. It is embedded in the idea that public services should be responsive, effective, equitable, as well as accountable to the needs of citizens and society. On the other hand, participation refers to the involvement of citizens, stakeholders, and communities in the design and delivery of public services.

Public service organizations (PSOs) often fail to foster participation, resulting in inward-looking goal-setting and decision-making processes (Rose et al. 2018). However, participation in public services can provide PSOs with vital feedback on their jobs by alerting them about changes in service priorities, the clientele they serve, or the need to reallocate scarce resources (An and Meier 2022). Moreover, if value creation is a goal of PSO, reconciling what citizens expect from a service and how they perceive its significance is essential for service delivery (Petrovsky et al. 2017). Under PSL, citizens co-create value when a public service is used, and their satisfaction and service value depend upon the service experience (Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021). This suggests that incorporating their knowledge into creating, planning, and designing public services enables PSOs to meet better their expectations and needs (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012).

The existing literature acknowledges that citizens are not passive receivers of public services. Instead, they are valuable participants in delivering public services (Osborne and Brown 2011a). However, studying the motives of citizen participation in public services is still embryonic. (Osborne 2020).

Citizens have specific resources (such as time, expertise, and local knowledge) that can be used in response to contemporary public sector problems.

This has resulted in a variety of policy domains in which citizens participate in public service delivery, such as public transport (Gebauer et al. 2010), health, and social care (Pestoff 2012a), and education (Jakobsen 2013; Ostrom 1996). Given the increasing importance of service delivery, recent studies explore how citizens can be motivated, why they would step in and co-produce critical public services, resulting in value co-creation for their own lives (e.g., Alford 2002; Andersen et al. 2017; Jakobsen and Andersen 2013; Moseley et al. 2018; Voorberg et al. 2018).

Only a few scholarly papers examine the outside-in perspective, in which participation informs service design and delivery, allowing for value co-creation (Hardyman et al. 2019; Trischler et al. 2019). Consequently, we need a greater understanding of the motivational factors that encourage citizens to engage in co-production and value creation.

This Cambridge Element aims to advance theory by investigating the nature of participation in public service delivery. It situates it under the theory of PSL to advocate for a strategic orientation to participation as an element of value creation in public services. Our work builds on the long-term research initiatives of the authors.

This Element first reviews the concept of participation in public services in the existing public administration and management (PAM) literature, and then situates it within PSL (Section 1). The following section (Section 2) introduces the concept of participation, discussing the motives, incentives, and tools to engage citizens in public service delivery processes. Then, Section 3 frames citizens' participation under the approach public service ecosystem (PSE) to capture the dynamic relationships among citizens, other actors, processes, and structures that may contribute to determining value in public service delivery. Section 4 presents the dynamics of value creation and destruction in public service. The final section articulates the volume's contribution and suggests a future research plan. We hope to inspire scholars to advance further the intrinsic value of participation in public service processes and ecosystems.

## 1 Citizen Engagement and Trajectories of Public Service Reform

Since the 1960s, five influential narratives of reform with PAM have shaped the debate on participation. These have evolved chronologically but have often overlapped in time and been influenced by one another. Each of them has articulated a narrative of participation – though its definition and rationale have changed over time, as the analysis here notes. This section explores why these discourses saw public participation in service delivery as necessary (despite criticisms in the case of the NPM) and how they sought to enact it.

For example, NPA and NPS embedded a normative approach to participation as a ‘good thing’, addressing the democratic deficit in society and as a counter-balance to the power of social elites and public service officials (LaPorte 1971). In contrast, NPM has been criticized, for its disregard for citizen and service user participation, except in the narrow economic sense of the self-interested consumer and the promotion of managerialism and consumerism. New Public Governance began as an entirely descriptive approach to ‘actually existing’ public services and the role of citizens in their co-production (Osborne 2010) and thence developed into a normative theory of Collaborative Governance that argued for participation as a route to transparent and responsive public services (Sorensen and Torfing 2018). Finally, PV has articulated a discourse of participation that situated this element as part of networked attempts to enhance the effectiveness of public services through such prescribed mechanisms as consultation processes and formal hearings (Homer and Hutton 2011). Table 1 portrays the key dimensions of these five reform narratives, and the subsequent analysis discusses them in more detail with reference to their stance on participation.

### 1.1 New Public Administration (NPA)

In reaction to the perceived failings of traditional Public Administration (PA), early NPA scholars argued for restoring democratic values by placing citizens at the centre of public service decision-making (White 1971). This aim was to be facilitated predominantly by structural changes, such as decentralization and delayering, and required the active involvement of civic-minded and educated citizens (Frederickson 1980).

Whilst the participation narrative is still broadly situated in the public sector context, it has been impacted by the subsequent hegemonic influence of the NPM (e.g., Vigoda and Golembiewski 2001). With social equity as its defining feature, NPA argued against the hegemony of the private sector norms associated with NPM. The NPA narrative has been criticized for having had only limited impact upon actual public service reform (Denhardt and Denhardt 2015). There is also a lack of empirical evidence explaining how the structural changes proposed by NPA can enable greater participation or social inclusion. Finally, NPA has been criticized for facilitating the participation of articulate citizens and elites, rather than the marginalized groups intended (Ingraham and Rosenbloom 1989).

### 1.2 The New Public Management (NPM)

From the 1980s onwards, NPM has developed as the pre-eminent narrative of public service reform. It emerged from critiques of PA strongly linked to

Table 1 Participation within the five narratives (adapted from Osborne and Strokosch 2022).

Theories				
Elements of participations	NPA	NPM	PV	NPS
Rationale	Dissemination of power, accountability, and legitimacy	Enhancing services and cost reduction	Creation of public value and societal learning	Democratic revitalization and legitimacy
Locus	Political discourse	Service assessment	Indirect engagement through representative democracy	Deliberation during entire service cycle
Mechanisms	Decentralization and advocacy	Implementation of market mechanisms	Political deliberation and networks formation	Fostering active citizenship through deliberation
				Inter-organizational collaboration and service provision
				Collaboration networks and co-production

a political agenda that centred on the privatization and marketization of public service provision to ‘roll back the state’ (Hood et al. 1988). New Public Management has been widely criticized for disregarding citizen participation because of its managerialism (Christensen and Laegreid 2011) and its consumerism (Powell et al. 2010). These strands reconstituted citizens as self-interested and passive consumers. New Public Management sought to empower citizens by exercising individual preferences in the markets/quasi-markets for public services, but not by active participation in the service delivery process. This discourse privileged public managers as ‘experts’, a distinction reinforcing existing power asymmetries between such managers and citizens based on education and expertise. It has also been subject to critique for the atomization of citizens and the undermining of their collective power (Millward 2005).

The late 1980s witnessed a range of reforms that tried to match the citizenship focus of NPA with the consumerist focus of the NPM through, for example, consumer councils (Stewart and Clarke 1987). However, participation here has typically been framed as an opportunity to reduce costs and increase efficiency rather than to enhance service effectiveness or democracy (Lowndes et al. 2001).

### 1.3 Public Value (PV)

Public Value emerged as a challenge to NPM in the 1990s and expressed a more collaborative approach with the intent of creating ‘public value’. It originated with the seminal work of Moore (1995) who developed a normative model of strategic development for public managers that emphasized the pursuit of PV. Public Value has subsequently developed into a broad narrative with nuances within it – as a theoretical framework that emphasizes public service improvement (Benington 2011), a normative narrative (Alford and O’Flynn 2009), and/or a governance framework (Bryson et al. 2014).

Despite these variations, participation is a central construct of the PV narrative and is typically offered as a means of addressing the limits of representative democracy (Yang 2016). There is a strong focus in PV on political interaction through networks of deliberation between elected/appointed government officials and civil society with the purpose of facilitating negotiation, cooperation, and decision-making among diverse groups (O’Flynn 2007). Participation is operationalized predominantly through formal (e.g., public hearings) and informal (e.g., lobbying) networks.

Creating PV is reliant on citizens’ participation in the decision-making stage to understand their needs, concerns and aspirations. Moreover, recognizing that today’s complex societal challenges cannot be effectively addressed by individual (public) organizations alone, the creation of PV during the service-delivery stage

equally relies on cooperative efforts involving multiple actors, including the participation of citizens mainly through third sectors, community organizations and civil society. In this regard, PV narrative suits the emergence of networked/collaborative governance (Stoker 2006). The efforts to integrate discourses on collaborative governance and PV narrative have therefore been gaining attention in recent years (Bryson et al. 2014). Relevant research has sought to provide a normative approach to articulate the importance of collaborative arrangements in creating and safeguarding PV. However, criticisms are raised related to the challenges in coordinating actions, addressing power asymmetries, and ensuring accountability. When poorly organized, collaborative governance can result in PV failure (Williams et al. 2016).

A core criticism of PV is its having been developed as a polemic against NPM, but with limited evidence of its own efficacy (Williams and Shearer 2011). Further, whilst citizens are described as active, participative, and responsible, PV also defines public managers as ‘creative entrepreneurs’ who translate policy into proposals about what is valuable (Moore and Benington 2011) and who, crucially, control the extent of participation, thereby reinforcing traditional power relations (Dahl and Soss 2014). Finally, like NPA, PV has also been reproached for the disproportionate inclusion of organized and articulate elites at the expense of marginal and informal groupings (Williams and Shearer 2011).

#### 1.4 New Public Service (NPS)

New Public Service emerged from the US in the early 2000s (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). It developed from a critique of NPM and a desire to replace it with an open and accessible system of governance, within which the citizen becomes central to decision-making throughout the public service delivery cycle. New Public Service is underpinned by three theoretical perspectives: democratic citizenship, which demands greater citizen engagement and a shared vision of ‘public interest’; models of community and civil society, where the government plays a key role in the renewal of civil society; and ‘organizational humanism’ with a focus on the needs and preferences of citizens, rather than bureaucratic control or objective performance measurements (deLeon and Denhardt 2000). New Public Service proposes a ‘virtuous circle’, where participation is defined as of intrinsic value to citizens and leads to their taking greater civic responsibility – which, in turn, catalyses further participation in public service delivery (Denhardt and Denhardt 2015). Structural changes are paramount to the NPS agenda, with the role of government ‘to serve rather than steer’. It acts as the negotiator, enabler, and facilitator of collaborative

relationships, and public managers play a key role as ‘transformative leaders’ (Jun and Bryer 2017).

Although NPS takes a strong normative stance, its arguments for participation have not been substantiated by empirical research. Its focus on structural changes, for example, suggests an oversimplification of participation in practice, by overlooking the need to carefully organize and facilitate the *processes* of participation (Fischer 2006) or to account for the disproportionate influence of social elites. Furthermore, the NPS argument that participation should be institutionalized is hard to implement because it assumes that all citizens have a latent desire for participation that can be awakened. Yet, there is a scarcity of evidence to validate this argument (Brugue and Gallego 2003).

### 1.5 New Public Governance (NPG)

Finally, NPG was first articulated by Osborne (2010) to describe the impact that approaches to network governance and collaboration within ‘actually existing’ public service delivery have upon PAM. Consequently, NPG built on organizational sociology and network theory to suggest that public management is enacted by networks of actors from the for-profit, public and third sector. Within this narrative, participation was framed in two ways. First, ‘co-production’ was integrated and repositioned within this narrative. Re-conceptualized as co-producers (rather than as consumers, as in the NPM), citizens were here described as working in a horizontal, interactive and co-operative relationship with government (Pestoff 2012b). The potential advantages of co-production were discussed widely in the NPG literature, including its potential to increase democracy and tackle challenging social issues (Bovaird 2007).

There has been extensive debate surrounding the varieties of co-production in public services. Researchers have suggested different taxonomies based on ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘what outcomes’ of co-production (Nabatchi et al. 2017). More research has further explored the context in which and the reasons for which co-production should take place (Steiner et al. 2022). Additionally, recent years have witnessed a growing discourse about the relationship between service co-production and value co-creation (Voorberg et al. 2015).

Second, a new generation of research has repositioned the NPG as a normative framework of ‘collaborative governance’. This work has examined the democratic capacity of various actors to work in co-operative relationships to achieve societal consensus. It has been argued to both increase democracy and reduce the cost of public services (Sorensen and Torfing 2018).

Whilst it has been welcomed for involving a plurality of actors, the inclusiveness of NPG has been questioned. Critics have argued that, in practice,