

## **Critically Exploring Co-production**

### **A special issue of *Qualitative Research Journal***

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### **Aims and Scope**

In this special issue we invite contributions that question whether university structures can accommodate research that is genuinely co-produced, highlight tensions in on-the-ground co-productive practices, describe the often circuitous ways alliances emerge, and speculate about the limits and possibilities of co-production.

We welcome contributions that acknowledge the various genealogies of concepts that inform co-production across fields such as education, community development, youth work, the arts as well as in clinical and health settings. We welcome discussions about the limits of traditions and concepts that inform co-production rooted possibly in the work of Paulo Freire, European critical theory, feminist studies, critical social science and health studies.

This special issue invites people who are involved in co-production as practitioners as well as more academic pieces to contribute ideas. We envisage shorter pieces together with dialogues as well as asking discussants to reflect on some of the pieces. Experimentation with form is welcome. Initial abstracts are invited as part of this process.

We welcome contributions in the following areas:

- Critical enquires into the role of the university in co-produced research projects
- Co-production; research method or socio-political practice
- Ethnography and co-production
- Critical pedagogy and co-production
- Arts practice and co-production
- Creativity and co-productive practice.
- Failure and co-production

- Ethical dilemmas and co-production

### **Submissions and deadlines**

1. 500 word abstracts due 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 – these can be sent to [k.pahl@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:k.pahl@mmu.ac.uk)
2. Full papers of 3,000 to 7,000 words due 10 January 2021

Author guidelines for submission can be found at:

[https://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/author\\_guidelines.htm?id=QRJ](https://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=QRJ).

Your article must be submitted via ManuscriptCentral (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/qrjnl>).

### **Background to the call**

Co-production occupies a prominent position in global policy and practice imaginaries (Bevir, 2019). We have seen co-production become integral to public service governance in Global South and Global North contexts, spanning urban infrastructure programmes to education and research. The large scale UK based Connected Communities, Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded programme was set up to experiment with and interrogate emergent co-production practices (Facer and Enright, 2016) ([https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final\\_.pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final_.pdf)).

In line with concerns about top down, expert knowledge being mobilised to treat societal problems, coproduction, at its best, aimed to: a) start with community concerns; b) research *with* and not *on* community members and c) inform policy by building on assets rather than deficits (e.g. Eisenstadt and McClelland, 2020).

Research has become increasingly critical, questioning if co-production means asking communities to do more with less. For example, co-production has been taken up extensively in health and clinical contexts, yet often in rather instrumental and programmatic ways.

On the other hand, co-production research has been shaped by innovative alliances with the arts and artist leading to some radical participatory approaches. Questions about who are the 'experts' and whose knowledge is recognised have lead some co-production endeavours to run with new ethico-onto-epistemological methodologies (e.g. Barad 2007; Stengers, 2011) in exciting ways, especially when group alliances are motivated by their urgency, such as climate emergency, Black Lives Matter, poverty and possibly Covid-19.

Issues such as the imbalance of power among participants, tokenism, neoliberalism as well as exploitative and extractive practices by universities and other organisations are central debates. Accordingly, much of the co-production research literature addresses constraints to collaborative working practices, for example, due to the managerialism within universities, questioning whether public institutions can learn from communities particularly those that have historically been marginalised. We ask, does co-production have transformational potential or is disenchantment with the ways co-production plays out for communities on the ground signal its end point? This special issue will engage with these debates, offering fresh perspectives.

## Contact

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