

Shaping Support for Coproduction
in the Public Sector:
Contributing Factors to Political,
Public and Organizational Support

Nadine Malmberg Hollmann

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The core research question of this dissertation explores what shapes support for a certain type of policy. This, in turn, raises an even more interesting question: What shapes the successful journey of a PhD? What I have come to realize is that while a PhD may seem like a solo expedition from the outside, this is far from the full story. In reality, it is shaped greatly by the support, guidance and encouragement of many. As I reflect on this journey, I am deeply grateful to those who have walked alongside me, offering their advice, patience and unwavering belief in me.

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Nadine Malmberg Hollmann,
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Chapter 1:

Introduction

A growing tendency is observed in western welfare states to adopt policies aimed at rethinking the traditional structures of public service delivery (Howlett et al., 2017; Jaspers & Steen, 2019; Sorrentino et al., 2018). One type of policy receiving increasing attention from decision-makers systematically encourages citizens to ‘pitch in’ and provide greater input to services – also referred to as coproduction (Alford, 2009; Alford & O’Flynn, 2012; Bovaird, 2007; Nabatchi et al., 2017).

The promises and perils of adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector have been debated since the late 1970s (Brudney & England, 1983; Parks et al., 1981; Percy, 1983; Whitaker, 1980). On the one hand, coproduction is shown to improve quality of services (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Brudney & England, 1983; Loeffler & Bovaird, 2018), enhance service efficiency (Brudney, 1984) and foster citizen self-efficacy (Thomsen, 2017). On the other hand, coproduction is shown to impose psychological costs on citizens (Thomsen et al., 2020) and imply organizational risks, reduced accountability and increased inequality (Brudney, 1985; Steen et al., 2018). As coproduction offers both opportunities and risks for the public sector, its growing prominence among decision-makers highlights a need for a deeper understanding of what may foster or hinder its occurrence.

According to public administration literature, policies are more likely to be adopted in the public sector if they are supported by the political system, the public and government institutions (Matland, 1995; May & Winter, 2007; Winter, 1985). This highlights the importance of political, public and organizational support.

Coproduction initiatives are commonly adopted in the context of public service agencies (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Honingh et al., 2020), i.e. in organizational contexts shaped by politically decided resources (Baekgaard et al., 2020; Thomsen et al., 2020), emphasizing the importance of political support from policy makers. Adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector also requires citizen participation, making citizen support for coproduction critical. Citizens can voice support or opposition through democratic structures like voting (Mintrom, 2003), be unwilling to participate (Andersen et al., 2020; Hattke & Kalucza, 2019) or opt for alternative service providers (James & John, 2021). In this sense, citizens may potentially hinder adoption of coproduction initiatives by imposing political or organizational costs. In service agencies, agency managers play a key role in facilitating successful

mixing of input from service professionals and citizens (Jensen & Thomsen, 2023). As overall representatives of the organization, agency managers are in a position to significantly shape organizational priorities (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018) and ensure organizational structures that reflect both citizen needs and professional standards (Nielsen, 2014). This highlights the importance of organizational support from agency managers for adopting coproduction initiatives.

While the importance of political, public and organizational support has been highlighted concerning adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector, empirical evidence on the factors shaping this support remains limited. Therefore, this dissertation asks: *What factors contribute to political, public and organizational support for the adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector?*

Using the Danish eldercare sector as empirical setting, the dissertation uses survey experimental methods to examine potential contributing factors to political, public and organizational support for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector. As policy makers, citizens and agency managers each represent distinct perspectives on the political system, public opinion and government institutions, insights from multiple literature strains are combined to understand the factors shaping the actors' support for coproduction. The dissertation consists of three solo-authored papers and a summary report that discusses the overall theoretical framework of the dissertation and the common themes across papers A, B and C.

Based on a preregistered two-by-two survey experiment on council members of Danish municipalities, paper A examines risk of service decline and the presence of professional responsibility for core services as contributing factors to political support for coproduction initiatives. Paper B tests, using a preregistered two-by-two survey experiment on a representative sample of the Danish population, the presence of personal relations in service delivery and professional responsibility for core services as contributing factors to public support for coproduction initiatives. Finally, paper C tests, using two preregistered vignette experiments on agency managers of Danish nursing homes, the impact of knowledge, experience and insight represented by bottom-up actors and protection of organizational resources represented by top-down actors as contributing factors to organizational support for coproduction initiatives.

Table 1 gives an overview of the papers included in the dissertation

Table 1. Overview of papers in the dissertation

PAPER	TOPIC	TITLE
A	Political support	Does Risk of Service Decline increase Policy Maker support for Coproduction? Results of a two-by-two survey experiment <i>R&R in International Public Management Journal</i>
B	Public support	Understanding Citizen Support for Coproduction: The impact of Coproducer Type and Service Task Organization <i>Under review in Public Administration Review</i>
C	Organizational support	Do Agency Managers respond more to Bottom-Up or Top-Down Encouragements to Coproduce Public Services? Results of two survey experiments <i>Under review in Public Management Review</i>

This summary report consists of five chapters. In chapter 2, the overall theoretical framework of the dissertation is discussed, including understanding and use of the coproduction concept. In chapter 3, arguments about the choice of empirical setting, research designs and important measures are presented along with an overview of studies and collected data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the three papers, which each examine potential contributing factors for political, public and organizational support. Chapter 5 discusses the implications, contributions, and potential limitations of the dissertation, along with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2:

Theoretical Framework

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, the concept of coproduction is defined. Since the late 1970s, the concept of coproduction has been used in various meanings and contexts and therefore requires careful theoretical consideration. Next follows a theoretical overview of contributing factors to political, public and organizational support for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector. Three key actors, policy makers, citizens and agency managers, are described, and distinct contributing factors to political, public and organizational support are discussed.

2.1 Defining the Coproduction Concept

The coproduction concept was first introduced in the late 1970s (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1979; Parks et al., 1981; Sharp, 1980; Whitaker, 1980). Initially, Parks et al. (1981) defined the concept as the mixing of input from regular producers (public sector) and consumer producers (service users) in the delivery of public services. The mixing of input may occur directly based on coordinated efforts within the same production process or indirectly through independent but related efforts (Parks et al., 1981).

Coproduction involves a mixing of the productive efforts of regular and consumer producers. This mixing may occur directly, involving coordinated efforts in the same production process, or indirectly through independent, yet related efforts of regular producers and consumer producers (Parks et al., 1981: 1002).

Through the years, scholars have suggested refining the concept. For instance, Brudney and England (1983) and Bovaird (2007) argued that the definition of consumer producers should not only include service users but also volunteers and community groups. Recently, scholars have suggested specifying the different stages of the service cycle such as co-design or co-assessment (Nabatchi et al., 2017) and have encouraged greater awareness of co-creation processes (Røiseland, 2024).

The concept of coproduction remains highly complex and is used in various meanings and contexts, which creates a need for careful theoretical consideration and transparency in its usage. This dissertation draws on Parks et al. (1981) theoretical conceptualization and defines coproduction as the mixing of input from the public sector and citizens in the delivery of public services. However, citizens may benefit and contribute to service delivery in different ways. Therefore, this dissertation builds upon Bovaird et al. (2015)

categorization of coproduction as being primarily individual or collective and on Brandsen and Honingh (2016) distinction between coproduction of core or complementary service tasks.

Bovaird et al. (2015) distinguish between individual and collective coproduction based on two criteria: Whether coproducer input to services is provided individually or collectively (i.e. in groups, involving coordinating efforts), and whether benefits from coproduction are enjoyed individually by users (i.e. privately) or by a group of individuals such as communities (i.e. in a philanthropic sense).

Table 2. Individual and Collective Coproduction

		Benefits from coproduction	
		Individually enjoyed	Collectively enjoyed
Inputs to coproduction	Individually provided	Type A <i>Private individual coproduction</i>	Type C <i>Philanthropic individual coproduction</i>
	Collectively provided	Type B <i>Private collective coproduction</i>	Type D <i>Philanthropic collective coproduction</i>

Note: Inspired by Bovaird et al. (2015).

This dissertation concerns coproduction initiatives observed in the public sector where volunteers and relatives are involved in delivery of individual services to users, i.e. provide input that is individually (privately) enjoyed. However, input to services provided by relatives and volunteers differ in important ways. Input provided by volunteers is often characterized by formal coordination structures with the service agency (i.e. collectively provided input), whereas relatives are commonly involved as coproducers on more individual and informal premises (i.e. individually provided input).

Besides variation in the type of input and benefits of coproduction, a recent conceptualization by Brandsen and Honingh (2016) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the different types of service tasks that may be coproduced, as service tasks may be categorized based on their connection to the core service of the organization. As providing care for residents is a core organizational mission in many nursing homes, core service tasks could be personal hygiene or feeding, whereas taking the residents for a walk outside would be complementing the core organizational mission of care (Damgaard et al., 2023; Jensen & Thomsen, 2022, 2023). This dissertation

focuses on coproduction of both core service tasks and complementary service tasks (papers A and B).

As different causes, mechanisms and effects are associated with different types of coproduction based on the input provided, the benefits created and the types of service tasks being coproduced, it is important to note that the theoretical arguments of the dissertation only relate to the types of coproduction being studied. For instance, coproduction of core service tasks may be characterized by different mechanisms depending on the policy area. The generalizability of results for other types of coproduction are discussed in chapter 5.

2.2 Support for Coproduction: Three Important Actors

Coproduction initiatives are frequently adopted in service agencies such as primary schools or nursing homes (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Honingh et al., 2020). Often placed under the jurisdiction of local government, these agencies are highly influenced by political decision making with expectations of political responsiveness (Baekgaard et al., 2020). Public service agencies are therefore dependent on organizational resources decided within the political system (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018; Nielsen, 2014). This results in organizational sensitivity to politically created changes to public service delivery and to political support for changes created at the organizational level. In this sense, policy makers hold the ability to directly influence adoption of coproduction initiatives via political channels and indirectly by setting political direction with an expectation of political responsiveness.

Adopting co-production initiatives requires successful mixing of input from both service professionals and citizens. This process is often dependent on citizens' willingness to increase their efforts in service delivery. Therefore, adopting coproduction initiatives also introduces the importance of citizen support. First, citizens may voice their opinion about service changes (Hirschman, 1970; James & John, 2021), for instance via democratic structures such as voting (Mintrom, 2003). In this sense, citizens may impose political costs for policy makers if they do not support adopting coproduction initiatives. Citizens may also be unwilling or refuse to participate in coproduction initiatives, making adoption processes difficult and costly for the service agency (Andersen et al., 2020; Brudney, 1985; Steen et al., 2018). In some instances, citizens may exit the organization and find other service providers (Hirschman, 1970; James & John, 2021).

As coproduction often takes place in public service agencies, it occurs in organizational contexts characterized by agency managers' discretion and facilitation. As overall representatives of the organization, agency managers are

expected to be responsive to both citizens' service needs and political demands while protecting organizational resources and ensuring professional standards (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018; Nielsen, 2014). Support from agency managers therefore matters for adoption of coproduction initiatives as agency managers play an important role in shaping organizational priorities and fostering organizational structures that ensure successful mixing of input from citizens and service professionals.

Even though the importance of support from policy makers, citizens and agency managers has been emphasized for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector, empirical evidence on the factors shaping their support remains scarce. The next sections give an overview of and discuss the potential contributing factors to political, public and organizational support for coproduction.

2.3 Understanding Political Support for Coproduction

In literature, coproduction is recurrently claimed as an often-used policy strategy by the public sector in response to inability to provide services (Brudney, 1984; Brudney & England, 1983; Levine & Fisher, 1984). Therefore, it is commonly assumed that policy makers are particularly interested in coproduction when they face a risk of service decline (Brudney & England, 1983; Parks et al., 1981; Rich, 1981).

In these arguments lies a central claim that policy makers are more willing to support coproduction initiatives when facing a risk of inability to provide services. On this basis, I expect risk of service decline to be a contributing factor to political support for coproduction initiatives.

Still, some types of coproduction might be more appealing from a policy perspective than others. For instance, it is commonly argued that involving citizens in core service tasks is more appealing to policy as it provides stronger effects concerning service quality (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Damgaard et al., 2023). At the same time, however, adopting this type of initiative might involve a greater risk of conflict with frontline staff.

In their recent study, Thomsen and Jensen (2019) show that service professionals are significantly more skeptical of coproducing core service tasks than of coproducing complementary service tasks. This potential risk is important from the perspective of policy makers, as the political system is commonly argued to be highly dependent on service professionals' attitudes in policy implementation processes (Matland, 1995; May & Winter, 2007). Therefore, I expect policy makers to be more supportive of coproduction initiatives involving complementary service tasks than of coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks. This underpins the importance of service task organiza-

tion that reflects professional responsibility for core services and thus a low risk of conflict with service professionals.

2.4 Understanding Public Support for Coproduction

Citizen support introduces an important perspective on adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector as asking citizens to increase their efforts in service delivery may produce positive effects such as better quality of services (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2018), higher service efficiency (Brudney, 1984) and strengthened sense of community (Jo & Nabatchi, 2018) and at the same time potentially impose political and organizational costs as discussed in section 2.2.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of awareness of the organizational features of coproduction initiatives as they may represent differences in policy potential for decision makers in the public sector (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016), differences in citizens' willingness to coproduce (Damgaard et al., 2023) and differences in perceived burdens for citizens (Thomsen et al., 2020). These elements raise the important question how organizational features may affect citizen support for coproduction initiatives. In literature, two organizational features are recurringly mentioned to impact citizen attitude towards coproduction: 1) the type of coproducer involved (Thomsen et al., 2020) and 2) the type of service task coproduced (Damgaard et al., 2023).

Focusing on the first organizational feature, policy makers are paying growing attention to involvement of relatives (Damgaard et al., 2023; Thomsen et al., 2020) and volunteers (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022; Nesbit et al., 2018) in service delivery. In public policy literature, it is commonly argued that involvement of relatives finds high legitimacy in the eyes of the public and the state based on the personal relation between relatives and service users (Dahl et al., 2015; Hansen & Dahl, 2021; Wærness, 1978). It is often argued that relatives provide high quality services due to greater awareness of family members' needs (Christensen & Wærness, 2017). On this basis, I expect citizens to be more supportive of coproduction initiatives based on personal relations due to an expectation of higher service quality.

Focusing on the second organizational feature, policy makers are paying growing attention to the potential of involving citizens (i.e. relatives and volunteers) in different types of service tasks (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022). These tasks may be directly or indirectly related to the core service of an organization such as teaching or care provision (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016). This provides an important perspective to understanding citizen support for coproduction, as research has emphasized that citizens commonly express high expectations to the public sector to professionally deliver core services (Andersen, 2012)

and react strongly when their expectations are not met (van den Bekerom et al., 2020). Following this logic, I expect citizens to be more supportive of coproduction initiatives that involve complementary service tasks than of initiatives involving core service tasks. This underpins the importance of service task organization that reflects professional responsibility for core services and thus meeting citizens expectations for core service provision.

2.5 Understanding Organizational Support for Coproduction

As top representatives of service agencies, agency managers are expected to be responsive to both citizens' service needs and political demands while protecting organizational resources and ensuring professional standards (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018; May & Winter, 2007; Nielsen, 2014). In literature, there are two perspectives on when agency managers support the involvement of citizens as coproducers of public services: when coproduction provides opportunities to enable the knowledge, insights and experiences of bottom-up perspectives (i.e. citizens and frontline staff) and when it protects organizational resources (i.e. responsiveness to top-down administrative and political principals).

Coproduction literature highlights that bringing together knowledge, insight and experience from citizens and frontline staff is a key motivational factor for agency managers in supporting coproduction initiatives (Brandsen et al., 2018; Jo & Nabatchi, 2018; Nabatchi et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2018; Pestoff et al., 2006). This speaks to the perceived relevance of the knowledge, insights and experiences that citizens and frontline staff bring into public service delivery. This is consistent with studies showing that agency managers perceive encouragements of change in public service delivery as especially relevant when presented by bottom-up actors such as frontline staff (Thøgersen, 2022) and citizens (Bussu & Galanti, 2018). On this basis, agency managers would be expected to support coproduction initiatives when it represents an opportunity to enable the knowledge, insights and experience from bottom-up actors such as frontline staff and citizens. Hence, I expect agency managers to perceive encouragements to coproduce public services as relevant to act-upon when presented by frontline staff and citizens.

Coproduction often occurs in public service agencies where democratic and administrative resources are decided outside the jurisdiction of the organization (Alford, 2009; Alford, 2012), which creates organizational dependency on resources decided by local government (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018). In protecting these resources, public service agencies are expected to be responsive within a hierarchical system to administrative and political principals

(Bryer, 2006). As a result of this dependency, agency managers tend to perceive top-down encouragements to create changes in public service delivery as urgent to act upon (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018). On this basis, agency managers would be expected to support coproduction initiatives when it represents protection of organizational resources. Hence, I expect agency managers to perceive encouragements to coproduce public services as urgent to act-upon when presented by administrative and political principals.

2.6 Overview of Contributing Factors

In sum, policy makers, citizens and agency managers engage with service agencies from distinct perspectives reflecting their roles and relationships with the organization. Consequently, their motivations for supporting coproduction initiatives in the public sector, as well as the pathways through which they offer or refuse support, are inherently different yet interconnected. Literature underscores these distinctions by offering varied explanations for the factors that contribute to political, public and organizational support. Table 3 gives an overview of these factors.

Table 3. Overview of contributing factors to political, public and organizational support

Type of support	Contributing factor
Political	Risk of service decline
	Professional responsibility for core services (low risk of conflict)
Public	Personal relations in service delivery (coproducer type)
	Professional responsibility for core services (meeting service expectations)
Organizational	Knowledge, experience and insight (bottom-up)
	Organizational resources (top-down)

Chapter 3: Research Design and Data

Papers A, B and C examine contributing factors for political, public and organizational support for coproduction initiatives based on four studies and three separate data collections. This chapter explains the choice of empirical setting and preregistered research designs in the dissertation. The chapter also describes the data collection processes and gives an overview of design, data and key variables for each study.

3.1 Empirical Setting

To understand which factors contribute to political, public and organizational support for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector, an empirical setting is needed that fulfills several requirements. First, a setting where coproduction initiatives are adopted to varying degrees and features in societal debates. Second, a setting that represents classic service provision in the sense that core and complementary services are regularly performed by service professionals in an organizational context balancing available resources, demands for service and citizen needs. In other words, a setting that fosters interdependence between citizens, service agencies and local government.

Danish nursing homes fulfill these requirements for several reasons. First, coproduction initiatives are increasingly adopted in Danish nursing homes (Damgaard et al., 2023) and recurringly feature in societal debate on elder care (Velfærdsrådet, 2023). Second, placed under the jurisdiction of local government, Danish nursing homes in many ways represent classic service provision with a core organizational mission of providing services to residents while balancing available resources, service demands and citizen needs (Danish Ministry of Health, 2024). While some of the 952 nursing homes in Denmark are privately funded organizations, most nursing homes are publicly owned and driven by the 98 municipalities (The Danish Health Authority, 2023).

3.2 Preregistration

Expected hypotheses, experimental designs, data collection procedures and analysis plan for all four studies were preregistered prior to data collection.¹ No deviations were made from preregistration, nor was any analysis conducted until data collection was completed. This section discusses the advantages of conducting preregistered studies.

First, preregistering a scientific study allows for a high level of transparency concerning expected outcomes, analysis strategies and data collection procedures and for clear distinction between hypothesis tests and exploratory tests (Monogan, 2013; Rice & Moher, 2019). Second, preregistration minimizes the risk of hindsight bias as it forces the researcher to formulate concrete theoretical expectations for the study before accessing data (Monogan, 2015). Finally, preregistration forces the researcher to make decisions about minor but important details in the study design, hence allowing for clarification of potential flaws in an early stage of the research process (Lakens, 2024; Monogan, 2015).

3.3 Design

Survey experimental designs were used in all four studies. This was a deliberate choice, as using survey experimental designs provides several advantages in understanding political, public and organizational support for adopting coproduction initiatives.

First, using survey experiments provides both the practical possibility and sufficient statistical power to study support for coproduction across different groups of actors in a causal setting. While other types of experimental designs such as field experiments are often emphasized in coproduction literature as advantageous due to the possibility of combining causality with a high level of ecological validity (Andersen et al., 2017; Jakobsen, 2012; Thomsen & Jakobsen, 2015), these types of designs are resource demanding and time consuming for both researchers and participants. These factors would make it less likely to reach all three groups of actors represented in this dissertation.

¹ All studies were preregistered using the Open Science Foundation Registry.

Preregistration Paper A:

https://osf.io/2qr9m/?view_only=494a04d50e2645e9b1e28c643176d630

Preregistration Paper B:

https://osf.io/qs5y8/?view_only=cd52174fd546e59f4420023eafe8ec

Preregistration Paper C:

https://osf.io/d7hg9/?view_only=43022cfe816e45958cef7670eef1ef5b

Second, survey experiments make it possible to study groups of actors, here policy makers and agency managers, who are especially hard to reach due to their demanding responsibilities (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015). While this commonly results in smaller sample sizes in survey research compared to other respondent groups – which is also the case in papers A and C – the easy task of filling out a survey still provides sufficient statistical power to study causal effects for these actors compared to field experiments.

Third, using survey experiments minimizes the risk of endogeneity issues understood as the ability to isolate a causal effect. This is especially important when studying policy makers' and agency managers' attitudes towards adoption of policies. In their recent article, Blom-Hansen et al. (2015) emphasize that organizational change – whether initiated politically or organizationally – in many cases happens in reaction to existing problems. Following this logic, I argue that identifying causality in otherwise observational settings of political and managerial support of organizational change such as coproduction can be challenging. This underpins the relevance of using survey experimental designs in the study of political and managerial support for coproduction.

Finally, the ability to randomly allocate respondents to experimental groups minimizes the risk of confounding effects. This is especially important in the study of citizen support for coproduction as it has frequently been emphasized that citizens with certain characteristics may have a particular attitude towards coproduction initiatives (Andersen et al., 2017; Jakobsen, 2012; Thomsen & Jakobsen, 2015). Using randomized allocation has the advantage of few or no systematic differences between the experimental groups on observed or unobserved variables.

Potential drawbacks of using survey experiments, however, include low ecological validity (see chapter 5).

3.4 Measuring Support

In chapter 2, I argued that policy makers, citizens and agency managers each engage with service agencies from distinct perspectives and consequently have different reasons for supporting coproduction initiatives in the public sector. Therefore, measures that capture these differences were developed for political, public and organizational support. This section describes each measure² and the rationale behind their development. Following preregistration and data collection, all items were combined in an additive index for each measure for analytical purposes.

² The items were given to the respondents in Danish. The Danish versions of each measure can be found in the individual papers.

Political support (policy makers)

Chapter 2 discussed how policy makers act within the political system and therefore have the ability to shape policy-formation processes and create policy changes to service delivery systems. On this basis, items were developed for political support that reflect the inclusion of policy makers in the political system. The items can be seen in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Items for political support

Political support
If such a proposal was put forward, I would ... <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. speak positively about the proposal at a local council meeting2. vote for the proposal at a local council meeting3. encourage other political colleagues to vote for the proposal4. express my support for the proposal on social media

Public support (citizens)

Chapter 2 discussed the importance of citizen support for coproduction due to their ability to impose political and organizational costs. One way citizens may express their support of – or opposition to – coproduction initiatives is by voicing their opinion via democratic structures such as voting. Therefore, items were developed that reflect citizens' ability to voice their opinions democratically and the extent to which they perceive adoption of coproduction as problematic or a good idea. The items are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. items developed for public support

Citizen support
If my municipality were to introduce similar initiatives in the nursing homes in my neighborhood, I would ... <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. support the proposal2. see the proposal as a good idea3. be enthusiastic about the proposal4. find the proposal problematic

Organizational support (agency managers)

Chapter 2 discussed two perspectives on when agency managers support the involvement of citizens as coproducers of public services: when coproduction provides opportunities to enable the knowledge, insights and experiences of bottom-up perspectives (i.e. citizens and frontline staff) and when it protects organizational resources (i.e. responsiveness to top-down administrative and political principals). On this basis, two measures were developed that reflect organizational support for coproduction: the extent to which the initiative is perceived as relevant and urgent when encouraged by bottom-up and top-down actors.

For relevance, items were developed that capture the extent to which the initiative is perceived as reflecting the values, visions and needs of the organization and the extent to which the initiative would be realistic to implement. Figure 3 shows the items.

Figure 3. items for relevance

Relevance
I see the suggestion as something that reflects ...
<i>Visions and values</i>
1. The values I believe this workplace stands for
2. The overall vision I have as manager of the workplace
<i>Organizational needs</i>
3. A current need I see at my workplace
4. A future need I see at my workplace
<i>Implementation</i>
5. An initiative that is realistic to implement within the next two years
6. An initiative that is realistic to implement across the organization

For urgency, items were developed that capture the extent to which the initiative requires quick action and response when encouraged. Items were also developed that capture the extent to which the answer requires careful consideration. The items are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. items for urgency

Urgency
<p>I see the suggestion as one where it is important to ...</p> <p><i>Tempo</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a quick response 2. Investigate the content in more detail <p><i>Action</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Discuss it in our leadership group 4. Provide a clear response <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Consider carefully how I respond 6. Consider how the person will react when I respond

3.5 Data and Studies

The four studies were conducted based on three separate data collections. This section first explains each data collection process and then presents an overview of the data, designs and key variables for each study.

Using a preregistered two-by-two survey experiment on 514 Danish council members, paper A tests the central claim in coproduction literature that policy makers increase their support for coproduction when facing a risk of service decline. Contact information was manually derived from public websites of the 98 municipalities in Denmark³. The survey was distributed to 2,459 respondents via email on January 18, 2024. In accordance with preregistration of data collection procedures, data collection lasted five weeks, ending on February 22, 2024, and respondents received three reminders during the data collection period.

Paper B tests the extent to which citizens support adoption of coproduction initiatives based on the type of coproducer involved and the type of service tasks being coproduced using a preregistered two-by-two survey experiment on 1,001 respondents representative of the Danish population. Data collection was performed by YouGov Denmark using their online panelist. The survey was distributed by email to respondents on October 8, 2024, and data collection was finalized on October 16, 2024.

³ A special thank you to Martin Bækgaard for his invaluable advice and expertise on local government contact information.

Based on two preregistered vignette experiments on Danish nursing home managers, paper C tests whether agency managers respond more to bottom-up or to top-down encouragements to coproduce public services. Contact information was provided for 952 nursing homes by the Danish Health Data Authority after legal approval was granted following a longer application process on data access. As some managers are affiliated with multiple organizations, all respondents were manually verified using the websites of each nursing home to ensure experimental validity. Some respondents had to be eliminated due to insufficient contact info, which resulted in a final list of 846 agency managers. The survey was distributed to respondents via email on March 2, 2023. In accordance with preregistration, data collection lasted five weeks including distribution of two reminders. Potentially due to survey fatigue following the length of the survey, some respondents dropped out during data collection as reflected in the response rate for each measure.

Table 4 gives an overview of the core research question, experimental design, data and key variables for each paper.

Table 4. Overview of studies, designs and data

Paper	Core research question	Experimental design and data	Key variables
A	Does risk of service decline increase policy maker support for coproduction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randomized two-by-two survey experiment on Danish council members (n = 514). Response rate = 21% • Respondents were exposed to vignettes stating scenarios of either service stability or risk of service decline in the municipality and afterwards vignettes providing examples of relatives to service-users coproducing either core or complementary service tasks as part of a public sector initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent variables Experimentally manipulated vignettes on risk of service decline vs. service stability, core vs. complementary service tasks • Dependent variables Survey items on political support and political costs
B	Do organizational features such as coproducer type and service task organization affect citizen support for coproduction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randomized two-by-two survey experiment on representative sample of Danish population (n = 1,001). • Respondents were exposed to vignettes stating Danish nursing homes increasing dependency on either relatives of residents or volunteers and afterwards vignettes with examples of either core or complementary service tasks being coproduced. • Subjects were recruited through YouGov's online panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent variables Experimentally manipulated vignettes on involvement of relatives vs. volunteers, coproduction of core vs. complementary service tasks • Dependent variables Survey items on citizen support and perception of public sector performance (efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, equity)

C	Do agency managers respond more to bottom-up or top-down encouragements to coproduce public services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study 1 Randomized vignette experiment on Danish nursing home managers comparing encouragements to coproduce public services by organizational actors (relevance measure n = 245, urgency measure n = 162). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were asked to read a scenario where an employee or an administrative superior encourages involvement of volunteers based on a magazine article on volunteering. • Study 2 Randomized vignette experiment on Danish nursing home managers comparing encouragements to coproduce public services by democratic bottom-up and top-down actors (relevance measure n = 236, urgency measure n = 219). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were asked to read a scenario where a relative of a resident or a council member encourages involvement of volunteers based on a magazine article on volunteering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent variables Vignettes experimentally manipulated on organizational or democratic actor types • Dependent variables Survey items on relevance and urgency of encouragement
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Chapter 4: Results

This chapter summarizes the dissertations' main findings, starting with findings for political support (paper A). Paper A examines the extent to which policy makers are more supportive of coproducing public services when facing a risk of service decline and in the presence of professional responsibility for core services. Second, regarding public support, paper B examines the extent to which citizens are more supportive of coproducing public services in the presence of personal relations between coproducer and service user and in the presence of professional responsibility for core services. Finally, regarding organizational support, paper C tests whether agency managers respond more to bottom-up encouragements to coproduce public services and the experience, knowledge and insight it represents or to top-down encouragements and the protection of organizational resources it represents.

4.1 Political Support

According to coproduction literature, policy makers tend to become more interested in coproduction when the ability to provide services is threatened and that coproduction, under these circumstances, is a common policy strategy. In these arguments lies a central claim that policy makers are more supportive of coproduction when facing potential service decline. This section presents results from an empirical test of this assumption using a two-by-two survey experiment on Danish council members (paper A). As some types of coproduction might be more prone to conflict than others while also being more appealing from a policy perspective, results are also provided on the extent to which policy makers support coproduction of complementary and core service tasks and of the extent to which policy makers associate these types of coproduction with an increased risk of political costs.

Table 5 shows the overall effect of risk of service decline on political support. In accordance with expectations, results show a positive, statistically significant treatment effect of the service decline frame on political support, indicating that policy makers do become more supportive of coproduction initiatives when facing a risk of service decline. Further, results show a positive, statistically significant treatment effect of the complementary service task frame on political support. In accordance with expectations, this indicates that policy makers are more supportive of coproducing complementary service tasks than of coproducing core service tasks and thus more supportive of initiatives that include professional responsibility for core services. However,

results also show that policy makers become more supportive of coproduction of core service tasks when facing potential service decline, indicating that this may represent a political window of opportunity to adopt coproduction initiatives.

Table 5. OLS regressions of service decline frame and complementary service task frame on political support

	Political support		
Service decline frame	0.46* (0.22)		0.84** (0.30)
Complementary service task frame		1.67** (0.21)	2.06** (0.30)
Interaction			-0.77+ (0.43)
Constant	4.87** (0.16)	4.27** (0.15)	3.84** (0.21)
<i>N</i>	514	514	514

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

Further, the findings on complementary service tasks in the main analysis are underpinned by secondary analysis in table 6 showing a positive, statistically significant treatment effect of the core service task frame on perceived political costs, suggesting that policy makers associate coproduction of core tasks with an increased risk of political costs compared to complementary tasks and hence emphasize the importance of potential conflict with service professionals.

Table 6. OLS regressions of service decline frame and core service task frame on political cost

	Political cost		
Service decline frame	-0.25 (0.17)		-0.27 (0.23)
Core service task frame		0.53** (0.16)	0.51* (0.24)
Interaction			0.02 (0.33)
Constant	6.12** (0.12)	5.73** (0.11)	5.87** (0.16)
<i>N</i>	497	497	497

Note: Dependent variable based on additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

4.2 Public Support

Using a two-by-two survey experiment on a representative sample of the Danish population, Paper B tests the impact of initiative organization on citizen support for coproduction. The paper investigates whether personal relations in service delivery (i.e. relatives vs. volunteers) and professional responsibility for core services may contribute to public support for coproduction initiatives. To further explore public perception of coproduction initiatives, paper B tests how adopting different types of coproduction initiatives affects citizens' perception of public sector effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness to citizen needs and equity.

Table 7 shows the overall effect of coproducer type and service task organization on citizen support. In contrast to expectations, a positive, statistically significant treatment effect of the volunteer frame on citizen support is observed, suggesting that citizens are more supportive of involving volunteers than of involving relatives as coproducers and thus more supportive of minimizing dependency on personal relations in service delivery.

In accordance with expectations, a negative, statistically significant treatment effect is observed of the core service task frame on citizen support, suggesting that citizens are more supportive of coproducing complementary service tasks than of coproducing core service tasks and thus more supportive of initiatives including professional responsibility for core services.

Table 7. OLS regressions of volunteer frame and core service task frame on citizen support

	Citizen support		
Volunteer frame	0.40** (0.10)		0.43** (0.15)
Core service task frame		-0.75** (0.10)	-0.73** (0.15)
Interaction			-0.05 (0.21)
Constant	4.52** (0.70)	5.10** (0.70)	4.89** (0.10)
N	1,001	1,001	1,001

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

Interestingly, the findings on core service tasks in the main analysis are underpinned by secondary analyses in table 8-11 showing a negative, statistically significant treatment effect of the core service task frame on perceived public sector effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness and equity. This indicates that citizens perceive the public sector as less effective, less efficient, less

responsive to citizens' needs and less inclusive when adopting coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks. For the volunteer frame, no treatment effect was observed.

Table 8. OLS regressions of volunteer frame and core service task frame on perceived effectiveness

	Perceived effectiveness		
Volunteer frame	0.11 (0.10)		0.24 (0.14)
Core service task frame		-0.52** (0.10)	-0.40** (0.14)
Interaction			-0.23 (0.20)
Constant	4.08** (0.07)	4.40** (0.07)	4.28** (0.10)
N	1,001	1,001	1,001

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

Table 9. OLS regressions of volunteer frame and core service task frame on perceived efficiency

	Perceived efficiency		
Volunteer frame	0.01 (0.11)		0.03 (0.15)
Core service task frame		-0.54** (0.10)	-0.52** (0.15)
Interaction			-0.04 (0.21)
Constant	4.73** (0.11)	5.01** (0.07)	4.99** (0.10)
N	1,001	1,001	1,001

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

Table 10. OLS regressions of volunteer frame and core service task frame on perceived responsiveness

	Perceived responsiveness		
Volunteer frame	0.12 (0.10)		0.15 (0.15)
Core service task frame		-0.53** (0.10)	-0.51** (0.15)
Interaction			-0.04 (0.21)
Constant	4.45** (0.07)	4.79** (0.07)	4.71** (0.10)
N	1,001	1,001	1,001

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

Table 11. OLS regressions of volunteer frame and core service task frame on perceived equity

	Perceived equity		
Volunteer frame	0.15 (0.11)		0.34 (0.16)
Core service task frame		-0.73** (0.11)	-0.56** (0.16)
Interaction			-0.35 (0.23)
Constant	3.98** (0.11)	4.43** (0.08)	4.27** (0.11)
N	1,001	1,001	1,001

Note: Dependent variable measured using additive index scaled 0-10. Standard errors in parentheses.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent critical level.

4.3 Organizational Support

As top representatives of a service agency, agency managers face a recurring difficult task of balancing the promises and organizational risks of coproducing public services while being increasingly encouraged by bottom-up actors and top-down actors to adopt coproduction initiatives. These actors, however, each represent distinct resources to the agency. On the one hand, service agencies are dependent on organizational resources decided by top-down actors such as political and administrative principals (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018; Nielsen, 2014). On the other hand, bottom-up actors such as citizens and frontline staff provide key insights and knowledge to service delivery (Alford, 2009; Bovaird, 2007; Nabatchi et al., 2017). This raises an important question

whether agency managers respond more to bottom-up encouragements to coproduce public services and the experience, knowledge and insight it represents or to top-down encouragements and the protection of organizational resources it represents.

Paper C tests this question using two vignette experiments on Danish nursing home managers. As scholars have argued that agency managers respond differently to encouragements for changes in public service delivery based on the type of power relation the encouragement represents (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018), one experiment in paper C focused on actors in a direct power relation to the manager and thus directly included in the organizational hierarchy (organizational actor experiment), while the other experiment in paper C focused on actors in an indirect power relation to the manager (democratic actor experiment).

In the organizational actor experiment, agency managers were shown a vignette describing a suggestion to adopt a coproduction initiative presented by either an administrative superior or an employee. In the democratic actor experiment, a similar suggestion was presented by either a council member or a relative of a resident at the nursing home. In each experiment, respondents were asked to rate how relevant and urgent they found the suggestion to be.

Table 12 and 13 show the results of both experiments. In the organizational actor experiment, a positive, statistically significant treatment effect is found of the administrative principal encouragement on urgency. There are some indications of a negative treatment effect of the frontline staff frame on relevance, potentially indicating a perceived relevance of encouragements presented by administrative principals⁴. The democratic actor experiment found no treatment effects of the citizen encouragement or the political principal encouragement, which indicates stronger responsiveness to top-down hierarchical encouragements and hence organizational resource dependency as contributing to organizational support.

⁴ While statistical significance was not observed for this finding, a small, standardized effect size still suggests some meaningful difference between groups (*Cohens d* = 0.19). For further discussion see Paper C.

Table 12. Un-paired t-test for administrative superior vignette on urgency and frontline staff vignette on relevance

		N	Mean	Diff	p-value	Cohen's d
Urgency of administrative principal encouragement	No	85	6.93	0.61*	0.02	0.39
	Yes	77	7.54			
Relevance of frontline staff encouragement	No	122	7.63	-0.34	0.15	0.19
	Yes	123	7.29			

Note: Mean of additive relevance index scaled 0–10. Un-paired t-test shows p-value for two-tailed tests with equal variance between groups.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level.

Table 13. Un-paired t-test for council member vignette on urgency and relative of service-user vignette on relevance

		N	Mean	Diff	p-value	Cohen's d
Urgency of political principal encouragement	No	113	6.92	-0.21	0.36	0.10
	Yes	106	6.71			
Relevance of citizen encouragement	No	117	7.58	-0.02	0.91	0.01
	Yes	119	7.56			

Note: Mean of additive relevance index scaled 0–10. Un-paired t-test shows p-value for two-tailed tests with equal variances between groups.

**, *, + indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent critical level

4.4 Overview of Findings

Several factors were found to contribute to political, public and organizational support for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector. Overall, these factors reflect the characterization provided in chapter 2 of the distinct yet interconnected interests and needs of the actors representing the political system, public opinion and government institutions. Table 14 below gives an overview of the factors contributing to political, public and organizational support based on the findings of the dissertation.

Table 14. Overview of findings for political, public and organizational support

Type of support	Contributing factor
Political support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of service decline • Professional responsibility for core services (low risk of conflict)
Public support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimized dependency on personal relations in service delivery (coproducer type) • Professional responsibility for core services (meeting service expectations)
Organizational support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational resources (top-down, hierarchical principals)

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter summarizes the most important findings of the dissertation and reflects on its contributions, implications, generalizability and applicability to real-life settings (i.e. ecological validity). Finally, potential avenues for future research are discussed.

5.1 Answering the Research Question

To address the overall question – What factors contribute to political, public and organizational support for the adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector? – four comprehensive studies were conducted using preregistered survey experimental designs. Together, the four studies examine contributing factors to support for coproduction from three critical perspectives: the political system, public opinion and government institutions. By integrating insights from policy makers, citizens and agency managers representing distinct yet interconnected interests and needs, the dissertation seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to support for coproduction initiatives in the public sector.

The dissertation identifies two important factors that shape political support: First, findings highlight the importance of contemporary political pressures, as policy makers are found to be more supportive of coproduction initiatives when facing a risk of service decline than when facing prospects of service stability. Second, findings highlight the importance of organizational features of coproduction initiatives and the extent to which these features could lead to conflict in the sense that policy makers are more supportive of coproduction initiatives that involve complementary service tasks than initiatives that involve core service tasks and associate the latter with an increased risk of political costs.

From the perspective of citizens, two factors are identified to shape public support, both relating to the organizational features of the initiative. First, findings highlight the importance of the type of coproducer involved as citizens, in contrast to expectations, are more supportive of coproduction initiatives that involve volunteers than of coproduction initiatives that involve relatives. Further, findings highlight the importance of service task organization as citizens are less supportive of coproducing core service tasks than of coproducing complementary service tasks and associate the former with lower public sector effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness to citizens' needs and equity.

Agency managers are found to be more responsive to encouragements to coproduce public services presented by top-down actors within the organizational hierarchy. In contrast, agency managers were not found to be responsive to encouragements presented by political principals nor bottom-up actors such as citizens and frontline staff. This indicates both stronger responsiveness to hierarchical principals and the importance of organizational resource dependency as contributing factor.

Overall, the findings provide important contributions to and implications for research and practice. The most important contributions and implications will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2 Contributions to Research and Practice

The findings highlight two significant contributions to research and practice: 1) Adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector is highly complex as it involves interconnected yet at times conflicting needs and interests of actors representing the political system, public opinion and government institutions; 2) adopting coproduction requires awareness of the distinct consequences and effects represented by different types of initiatives.

First, the findings clearly mark that adoption processes of coproduction initiatives are not only influenced by the willingness to participate but are also shaped by questions of political and organizational priority, resource dependency, perceptions of service quality and risks of conflict and costs. This underpins that successful adoption of coproduction initiatives requires careful attention to the interconnected yet at times conflicting needs and interests represented in the political system, public opinion and government institutions.

Second, the dissertation makes a significant contribution to research and practice by emphasizing how important it is that decision-makers and scholars are aware of the distinct consequences and effects represented by different types of initiatives. Specifically, some initiatives may be perceived as particularly burdensome, costly, prone to conflict or may speak to our perception of service quality. Recognizing these distinctions underlines that adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector cannot be treated as one-size-fits-all. Their distinct implications and challenges must be carefully considered both in design and execution.

The following sections reflect on the implications of the findings based on three overall themes: how the findings speak to the potential personal burden of coproducing public services, the role of hierarchy and politics, and the dilemma facing the public sector in coproducing core service tasks.

5.3 The (Personal) Burden of Coproduction

In contrast to expectations, the findings show that citizens are less supportive of involving relatives than of involving volunteers as coproducers, suggesting stronger opposition to coproducing public services based on personal relations. One explanation to this finding is the potential personal burden placed on relatives when coproducing public services. In recent research, Thomsen et al. (2020) show that citizens perceive coproduction of public services as particularly burdensome when it involves relatives compared to volunteers. Thomsen et al. (2020) discuss how volunteers and relatives are involved as coproducers in public service delivery based on different premises. While coproducing public services with volunteers involves formal coordination between service agency and volunteers, involvement of relatives is commonly more informal and thus increases burdens on relatives in navigating their family members' needs (Thomsen et al., 2020).

The finding that citizens are less supportive of involving relatives than of involving volunteers has important implications for literature and practice. First, it emphasizes the need to distinguish in coproduction literature between willingness to coproduce and support for coproduction. While citizens are commonly found to be highly willing to coproduce for the benefit of their family members (Damgaard et al., 2023), the findings of this dissertation emphasize that this does not necessarily mean being supportive of the initiative. Second, this finding has important implications for practice as it underpins the challenges for decision-makers and service agencies to increase reliance on relatives as coproducers.

5.4 The Shadow of Hierarchy and Politics

The findings show that agency managers generally respond more positively to top-down encouragements from within the organizational hierarchy to coproduce public services compared to encouragements provided by other actors. They also show that policy makers associate coproduction with an increased risk of political costs. This marks important implications for both research and practice.

Overall, the findings emphasize a general need for further awareness of the hierarchical and political characteristics of service agencies and their consequences for coproduction. As service agencies are highly dependent on top-down organizational resources, these organizations constantly operate under the expectation of hierarchical and political responsiveness. This has classically been referred to as the shadow of hierarchy (Scharpf, 1994). The findings of this dissertation only underpin this argument by showing that hierarchy and politics remain a constant shadow for coproducing public services. This is

important as barriers to and drivers of adoption of coproduction are commonly studied based on bottom-up interactions between service professionals and citizens. While these interactions undoubtedly represent important perspectives on the occurrence of coproduction initiatives, the findings of this dissertation emphasize that adopting coproduction initiatives involves the needs, interests and demands of many actors and therefore likely is not independent of organizational hierarchy or political priorities. This raises an important empirical question about how organizational hierarchy and political priorities may foster or hinder adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector.

5.5 The Dilemma of Coproducing Core Services

The complexities of adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector are especially emphasized in this dissertation concerning coproduction of core service tasks. The findings identify a difficult dilemma for the public sector: the initiative implies the greatest resistance and risks but is frequently highlighted in literature as holding the greatest potential for impact and citizen engagement.

On the one hand, coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks are found in this dissertation to receive the least support from policy makers and citizens. Compared to other types of initiatives they are also associated with a greater risk of political costs and lower public sector performance.

At the same time, coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks are emphasized in literature to hold the greatest policy potential. First, they hold the greatest promises of positive effects such as increasing service quality (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016). Second, citizens are more likely to engage in coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks as they tend to focus their time and efforts on tasks having the greatest impact for service users (Damgaard et al., 2023).

Overall, this calls for further scholarly discussion on the drivers of and barriers to coproducing core services in the public sector.

5.6 Generalizability and Applicability

Although the findings have several important implications, some potential limitations should be mentioned. First, reflections are provided regarding the generalizability of the findings to other contexts based on two dimensions: policy context and national context. Second, a common critique concerning survey research is that the method only to a limited extent reflects respondents' natural behavior. A discussion is therefore provided upon ecological validity, i.e. real-life applicability of the findings.

While the eldercare sector in Denmark is a well suited case to study political, public and organizational support for coproduction initiatives as discussed in chapter 3, it should be noted that the sector is characterized by lower levels of specialization, professional training and professional norms compared to, e.g. the educational sector (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). Consequently, if the studies included in this dissertation were to be performed in a different policy area such as primary education, it is likely that policy makers' and citizens' opposition to coproduction of core service tasks would be even stronger due to differences in levels of specialization and professional training.

From the perspective of agency managers, various outcomes could be expected. On the one hand, a recent study by Andersen and Jakobsen (2018) shows that agency managers in primary education are primarily responsive to political principals in encouraging changes to public service delivery. However, the authors do not distinguish between responsiveness to political and administrative principals. In this sense, another interpretation would be that similar results to this dissertation could be expected in other policy contexts since services agencies across policy contexts commonly share the characteristics of being classic public service agencies with the need to balance top-down responsiveness, demands for service and available resources.

Another potential limitation is the national context of Denmark. In the Scandinavian welfare states, citizens have equal access to welfare and high social protection (Andersen, 2012), and this has several important implications for the findings of this dissertation. First, while Denmark has traditions of involving relatives and volunteers in service delivery including core service task, it is likely to be less prevalent and systematic than in other welfare state contexts (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022, 2023). Therefore, it remains an open question whether policy makers and citizens would be equally opposed to coproduction of core service tasks in welfare state contexts where dependency on community resources in service delivery is higher such as in the US. It also remains an open question whether involvement of relatives would be more supported and thus perceived as less burdensome in welfare states with greater reliance on private and family relations such as Italy or Spain. Second, Danish service agencies are among other things characterized by regular encounters and coordination with local government representatives. In other welfare states with greater distance between government and government agencies but with closer connection to communities, findings from the perspective of agency managers concerning responsiveness to bottom-up and top-down encouragements might be different.

Turning to the applicability of the dissertation, a common discussion in survey research is the extent to which the method reflects the natural behavior of respondents and thus whether results can be generalized to real-life settings

(Cicourel, 1982; Morton & Williams, 2010; Sniderman, 2018; Sniderman & Grob, 1996). While studying real-life behavior of respondents through surveys is generally challenging, choices were made in this dissertation to accommodate this potential limitation and increase ecological validity for all three papers. First, respondents were deliberately recruited based on their real-life experiences with policy making, service delivery and citizen-state interactions in contrast to respondents in global survey panels based on economic compensation strategies such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Second, hypothetical scenarios were designed to reflect as closely as possible within ethical guidelines the contemporary real-life challenges to Danish service delivery and types of coproduction initiatives actually adopted in Danish nursing homes.

Respondents in paper A were local council members in Danish municipalities where political discussions about the need to rethink public services due to demographic changes and resource scarcity are currently ongoing – including political discussions about the benefits of adopting coproduction initiatives. In this sense, the study represents real-life challenges and complexities of policy making. Respondents in paper B, demographically representing the Danish population, were shown vignettes stating hypothetical scenarios that closely reflected political, societal and media discussions about the involvement of volunteers and relatives in Danish service delivery. In paper C, agency managers of Danish nursing homes were recruited as respondents. A setting where managers face interests, demands and needs from multiple sides every day while coping with recruitment challenges and protecting organizational resources. This is also a setting that more frequently adopts various types of coproduction initiatives.

5.7 Avenues for Future Research

The findings mark several important avenues for future research. From the perspective of policy makers, the findings raise two important questions. First, as the dissertation identifies potential service decline as an influential factor for political support for adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector, it raises a broader question concerning the political drivers of coproducing public services. Inability to provide services is commonly emphasized in coproduction literature along with other factors such as the motivation to deliver more effective and efficient services, to avoid cutting budgets or to avoid asking citizens to pay for welfare services privately. Second, as the findings show that policy makers associate coproduction with an increased risk of political costs, it raises an important question about potential political barriers to adopting coproduction initiatives. One relevant avenue for future research

is to explore different types of political costs. For instance, it might be the case that policy makers not only associate coproduction initiatives with an increased risk of costs due to risk of conflict with service professionals but also due to risk of voter punishment. This raises an interesting question whether policy makers associate some types of coproduction with a risk of service professional conflict and others with a risk of negative voter reaction. Another relevant question for future research could be to explore political costs associated with coproduction across welfare state contexts. Specifically, coproduction initiatives might not be associated with political costs to the same extent in national contexts with stronger dependency on private relations and community resources.

From the perspective of citizens, several important avenues for future research can be identified. First, the dissertation highlights a need for research into how adoption of coproduction initiatives affects citizens' perceptions of the public sector. While substantial research has been conducted on how coproduction may increase trust in government, the findings of this dissertation underpin the importance of distinguishing between different types of coproduction in the study of citizens' perceptions of the public sector. This raises an interesting question whether coproducing different types of services – such as core vs. complementary services – would increase or decrease citizens' trust in government. Second, the findings emphasize a need for further research into the conditions under which citizens support adoption of coproduction initiatives. The dissertation shows that policy makers increase their support for coproduction when facing a risk of service decline and thus marks potential service decline as a political window of opportunity. While research demonstrates that citizens are more willing to coproduce public services during times of service decline, the findings of this dissertation raise a relevant question concerning to what extent citizens become more supportive of coproduction as policy during these circumstances. Finally, the findings underpin the importance of further research into the potential personal burdens of coproducing individual public services and how expectations of personal burdens potentially hinder citizen support for coproduction initiatives.

The dissertation additionally emphasizes the need for research on the potentially conflicting demands and interests facing agency managers in the adoption of coproduction initiatives. Specifically, future research could explore how agency managers navigate conflicting demands and interests while balancing the promises and risks of coproducing public services and the potential leadership challenges of coproducing public services in service agencies.

One important perspective not represented in the dissertation is the perspective of service professionals. Given the findings about opposition to

minimizing professional responsibility for core services, these findings nevertheless emphasize the importance of professional perspectives on adoption and implementation of coproduction. Thomsen and Jensen (2019) show that service professionals are skeptical of involving volunteers, especially in coproduction of core service tasks while Jensen and Thomsen (2022) show that service professionals have stereotypical perceptions of volunteers. These findings combined with the findings of the dissertation raise interesting questions about service professionals' attitudes towards other types of coproduction initiatives. For instance, the extent to which service professionals hold stereotypical perceptions of different types of coproducers, such as volunteers vs. relatives.

Finally, as many western welfare states rethink the structures of public service delivery in response to resource scarcity and recruitment challenges, coproduction is not the only policy tool used in this process. Therefore, important avenues for future research lie in comparing coproduction to other policy tools, for instance, adoption of coproduction initiatives compared to paying for welfare services privately, or adoption of coproduction initiatives compared to international recruitment of service professionals.

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English Summary

A growing tendency is observed in western welfare states to adopt policies aimed at rethinking the traditional structures of public service delivery. One type of policy receiving increasing attention from decision-makers – often referred to as coproduction – systematically encourages citizens to ‘pitch in’ and provide greater input to services. This could be initiatives involving volunteers as mentors in primary schools or initiatives involving relatives in shopping and cleaning tasks for their family members in a nursing home. As the adoption of coproduction initiatives implies both promises and risks for the public sector, the growing prominence of coproduction among decision-makers highlights a need for a deeper understanding of what may foster or hinder its occurrence. Literature argues that policies are more likely to be adopted in the public sector when the political system, the public and government institutions support them. However, empirical evidence concerning contributing factors to political, public and organizational support for coproduction initiatives remains scarce.

Through four preregistered survey experimental studies of the Danish eldercare sector, this dissertation seeks to improve our understanding of the occurrence of coproduction initiatives by investigating potential contributing factors to political, public and organizational support in the eyes of three key actors: policy makers, citizens and managers of public service agencies. Based on their distinct characteristics, several factors are highlighted in literature that potentially influence their support for coproduction initiatives. Coproduction literature argues that policy makers’ attitudes towards coproduction are affected by the potential risk of declining service levels and risk of conflicts with service professionals. For political support, the dissertation therefore investigates the impact of potential service decline and types of service tasks being coproduced. Coproduction literature also argues that citizens may have different attitudes towards coproduction dependent on the organizational features of the initiative such as the type of coproducer involved and the type of service task being coproduced. For public support, the dissertation therefore examines the impact of the type of coproducer involved and the type of service task being coproduced. As overall representatives of public service agencies, agency managers often must balance expectations of responsiveness to political demands and citizens’ service needs. For organizational support, the dissertation therefore tests the impact of knowledge, insight and experience represented by bottom-up actors and protection of organizational resources represented by top-down actors.

In accordance with expectations, the dissertation finds that policy makers are more supportive of coproducing public services when facing a risk of service decline than when facing prospects of service stability. Policy makers are also more supportive of coproducing complementary service tasks than of coproducing core service tasks and associate the latter with an increased risk of political costs. This indicates stronger support for initiatives that involve professional responsibility for core services and thus a lower risk of conflict with service professionals. Findings also show some indication, however, that policy makers are more supportive of coproducing core service tasks when facing a risk of service decline. Hence, indicating that a risk of service decline may serve as a political window of opportunity to adopt coproduction initiatives in the public sector. In contrast to expectations, the dissertation finds that citizens are more supportive of involving volunteers than relatives as coproducers, potentially indicating a perceived increased burden for relatives in engaging in service delivery. In accordance with expectations, citizens are less supportive of coproducing core service tasks than of coproducing complementary service tasks and associate the former with lower public sector effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness to citizen needs and equity. Agency managers are found to be more responsive to encouragements presented by top-down actors included directly in organizational hierarchy, which indicates protection of organizational resources as contributing factor to organizational support.

These findings provide two significant contributions to research and practice. First, they highlight the complexities of adopting coproduction initiatives in the public sector as successful adoption involves the interests and needs of actors representing the political system, public opinion and government institutions. This emphasizes that adoption processes of coproduction initiatives are not only influenced by the willingness to participate but also shaped by questions of political and organizational priority, resource dependency, perceptions of service quality and risks of conflict and costs. Second, the findings contribute to research and practice by emphasizing the importance of decision-makers and scholars being aware of the distinct consequences and effects represented by different types of initiatives. Specifically, some initiatives may be perceived as particularly burdensome, costly, prone to conflict or may speak to our perception of service quality. Recognizing these distinctions underlines that adoption of coproduction initiatives in the public sector cannot be treated as a one-size-fits-all approach, but that the distinct implications and challenges of each initiative must be carefully considered in both design and execution.

Dansk Resumé

I mange vestlige velfærdsstater ses en stigende tendens til at vedtage offentlige initiativer, der sigter mod at gentænke de traditionelle strukturer for leveringen af offentlig service. En type initiativ, der får stigende opmærksomhed fra beslutningstagere, er såkaldte samproduktionsinitiativer, der aktivt søger at involvere borgere i leveringen af velfærdsydelser. Dette kunne være inddragelse af frivillige som mentorer i folkeskolen eller inddragelse af pårørende i indkøb og rengøring hos deres familiemedlem på plejehjem. På den ene side giver involvering af borgere i velfærdslevering anledning til positive effekter såsom øget servicekvalitet og øget effektivitet. På den anden side medfører samproduktionsinitiativer en række risici for den offentlige sektor, hvilket understreger et behov for en dybere underliggende forståelse af, hvad der kan fremme eller hindre vedtagelse af disse initiativer i den offentlige sektor. I litteraturen argumenteres der ofte for, at opbakning fra det politiske system, offentligheden og offentlige institutioner giver de bedste betingelser for vedtagelse af politikker i den offentlige sektor, dvs. politisk, folkelig og organisatorisk støtte. Imidlertid er der kun få empiriske studier, der belyser de faktorer, der bidrager til politisk, folkelig og organisatorisk opbakning til samproduktionsinitiativer.

Gennem fire præregistrerede survey-eksperimentelle studier af den danske ældreplejesektor søger denne afhandling at forbedre vores forståelse af forekomsten af samproduktionsinitiativer i den offentlige sektor ved at undersøge potentielle bidragende faktorer til politisk, folkelig og organisatorisk opbakning set med tre nøgleaktørers øjne: politiske beslutningstagere, borgere og ledere af offentlige serviceinstitutioner (f.eks. skoler og plejehjem). Baseret på deres forskellige karakteristika som repræsentanter for det politiske system, den offentlige mening og offentlige institutioner, fremhæver litteraturen flere faktorer, som potentielt kan påvirke, hvornår disse aktører udtrykker opbakning til samproduktionsinitiativer.

Ifølge samproduktionslitteraturen påvirkes politikernes holdning til samproduktion af potentiel serviceforringelse og potentiel konflikt med frontlinjemedarbejdere. For at forstå hvornår politiske beslutningstagere støtter samproduktionsinitiativer, undersøger afhandlingen effekten af risikoen for serviceforringelse og effekten af typen af serviceopgaver, som borgerne bedes løse. Det er også et tilbagevendende argument i samproduktionslitteraturen, at borgere kan have forskellige holdninger til samproduktion afhængigt af initiativets organisering, såsom typen af borger der involveres, eller de typer opgaver borgerne bliver bedt om at udføre. For at forstå den folkelige opbakning til samproduktionsinitiativer undersøger afhandlingen derfor effekten af

borgertypen, der involveres (er borgeren f.eks. frivillig eller pårørende), og effekten af typen af serviceopgave, som borgeren bedes løse. Som overordnede repræsentanter for organisationen må ledere af offentlige serviceinstitutioner såsom skoler eller plejehjem ofte balancere forventninger om lydhørhed over for politiske krav og borgernes behov for service. For at forstå organisatorisk opbakning tester afhandlingen derfor, hvorvidt ledere støtter mere op om samproduktionsinitiativer, når disse initiativer præsenteres af aktører, der repræsenterer viden, indsigt og erfaring med serviceproduktion (borgerne og frontlinjemedarbejdere), eller når initiativerne præsenteres af aktører, der repræsenterer sikring af organisatoriske ressourcer (politiske og administrative principaler).

I overensstemmelse med forventningerne finder afhandlingen, at politiske beslutningstagere støtter mere op om samproduktionsinitiativer, når de risikerer serviceforringelser, end når de står over for et stabilt serviceniveau. Politiske beslutningstagere støtter også i højere grad samproduktionsinitiativer, hvor borgere udfører komplementære serviceopgaver, end initiativer, hvor borgere udfører kerneopgaver. Politiske beslutningstagere forbinder ligeledes sidstnævnte med en øget risiko for politiske omkostninger. Dette indikerer overordnet en stærkere opbakning til samproduktionsinitiativer, der involverer professionelt ansvar for kerneydelser og dermed en lavere risiko for konflikt. På samme tid peger afhandlingens resultater dog i nogen grad på at politiske beslutningstagere støtter mere op om samproduktionsinitiativer, hvor borgerne udfører kerneopgaver, når der er risiko for serviceforringelser. Dette tyder derfor på, at en risiko for serviceforringelser kan fungere som en politisk mulighed for at indføre samproduktionsinitiativer i den offentlige sektor. I modsætning til forventningerne finder afhandlingen, at borgerne støtter mere op om at involvere frivillige end at involvere pårørende i velfærdslevering. Dette indikerer potentielt en folkelig opfattelse af, at inddragelsen af pårørende medfører en større byrde for den enkelte pårørende end for den frivillige. I overensstemmelse med forventningerne finder afhandlingen, at borgerne i mindre grad støtter initiativer, hvor kerneopgaver udføres af borgere, end initiativer, hvor supplerende serviceopgaver udføres af borgere. Afhandlingen finder ligeledes, at borgere forbinder samproduktion af kerneopgaver med lavere effektivitet i den offentlige sektor, mindre lydhørhed over for borgernes behov og mindre inklusion. For lederne af offentlige serviceinstitutioner observeres en stærkere lydhørhed over for opfordringer til at samproducere offentlige services, når disse præsenteres af administrative principaler (forvaltningschefer), hvilket indikerer betydningen af sikkerhed for tilførslen af organisatoriske ressourcer.

Resultaterne identificerer to væsentlige bidrag til forskning og praksis. For det første fremhæves kompleksiteten i at indføre samproduktionsinitiativer i

den offentlige sektor, da resultaterne viser, at indførelsen af samproduktionsinitiativer involverer interesser og behov hos forskellige aktører, der repræsenterer det politiske system, den offentlige mening og offentlige institutioner. Disse resultater viser dermed, at indførelsen af samproduktionsinitiativer i den offentlige sektor ikke kun påvirkes af viljen til deltagelse, men også formes af politisk og organisatorisk prioritering, ressourceafhængighed, opfattelser af servicekvalitet og risici for konflikt og omkostninger. For det andet bidrager afhandlingens resultater til forskning og praksis ved at understrege vigtigheden af, at beslutningstagere og forskere er opmærksomme på de konsekvenser og effekter, som forskellige typer af samproduktionsinitiativer repræsenterer. Specifikt kan nogle initiativer opfattes som særligt byrdefulde, omkostningsfulde, konfliktfyldte eller tale negativt til vores forståelse af servicekvalitet. Disse forskelle understreger, at indførelsen af samproduktionsinitiativer i den offentlige sektor bør tilgås forskelligt afhængigt af deres udformning, samt at deres forskellige konsekvenser og udfordringer bør overvejes nøje i både design og udførelse.