

The Routledge Handbook of Sustainable Cities and Landscapes in The Pacific Rim

Edited by
Yizhao Yang and Anne Taufen

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Chapter 56

Introduction to Section 9

Co-production for sustainable development

Anne Taufen

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INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 9

Co-production for sustainable development

Anne Taufen

The challenges of sustainable development are universal; at the same time, they are specific to the different contexts of cities and landscapes throughout the Pacific Rim. Co-production offers an approach to navigating this tension, addressing universal phenomena while respecting the integrity of particular places and institutions. For planning and engagement to further the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and support widespread improvement in the conditions of human experience, local and regional realities are paramount. Co-production includes and centers varying understandings of identity, capacity, and knowledge, to translate and implement global discourses of sustainable development.

Context

From a universal perspective, we know that a warming global climate, ocean acidification and sea level rise, increases in extreme weather events, reduced biodiversity and primary productivity, loss of agricultural production, and fractured kinship ties due to regional and global migration produce patterns of profound vulnerability that are common to all human settlements. More specifically, we know that the places where people make their homes and sustain their lives vary significantly. For instance, the physical geography and biological conditions of different regions pose unique challenges and opportunities regarding resource conservation, use, and renewal; and the political cultures and governing arrangements that characterize different cities, nation states, and regions of the world reflect a diversity of values and priorities that may or may not align neatly with the recommendations of international planning and policy organizations working to focus attention on the urgent need to develop more sustainably.

Navigating this tension between the universal and the particular in planning and engagement for sustainable development requires a conceptual frame that is sufficiently responsive to empirical conditions, and pragmatic regarding institutionalization and implementation, to relate to actual places where changes are made and sustained (Barry & Agyeman, 2020; Mitlin, 2008; Powell et al., 2019). While significant gains have been made in advocating for the governing ideals of a global civil society and the communicative ideals of a collaborative model of community-engaged, grassroots mobilization and policy change, the epistemological framework underlying each of these belies a Western European bias for

liberal-democratic, welfare statist arrangements that may or may not be germane to settings around the Pacific Rim and throughout the Global South. If development goals include the targeting of resources to alleviate suffering, improve and protect environments, promote well-being and prosperity, and prepare for catastrophic events or crises in public health, then planning and engagement must account for how things are, in order to activate and co-create the capacity to make progress in an equitable and sustainable direction.

Co-production model

The model of knowledge and service delivery *co-production* – which “sees people as assets rather than burdens, invests in their capacities, and uses peer-support networks in addition to professionals to transfer knowledge and capabilities” (Agyeman, 2013) (drawing on Sen, 2009) – does this in three ways that are essential for sustainable development, and evidenced throughout this section.

First, as resource economists and public management scholars have demonstrated, co-production takes a multi-sector approach to problem definition and service delivery that is more efficient and effective than initiatives led by a single public agency (Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 1996). While partial to the potentially dry and mechanistic challenges of complex institutional design, such “lean” approaches to governance and resource allocation are especially important in settings and during an era when public investments face the dual dangers of structural vulnerability (that is, neoliberalism) and intermittent crisis events (for instance, global pandemic).

Second, as interpretive planning and policy scholars have increasingly noted, co-production loosens the reins and liberates the capacities of people and communities to become co-creators in devising and sustaining their own solutions to public challenges, an approach that can elevate and empower local actors beyond and outside of the usual (bureaucratic) suspects. This is a methodological disposition as much as a framework or paradigm. Co-production can inquire: what might work here, what do people care about, and what matters most according to communities and conditions in this place? Context takes precedence, in co-production, requiring ongoing practices of inclusion and humility on the part of planning professionals (Quick & Feldman, 2011; Yanow, 1997).

Third, in terms of global knowledge production and the power relations inherent in local regimes of sustainable development, co-production claims and centers the interests of different communities in the creation and sustenance of workable, responsive solutions to the challenges faced by people who may lack representation, resources, and respect in established networks of sustainability planning and global governance (Mitlin, 2008; Watson, 2014). Whether this means organizing outside the bounds of agency plans and formal processes, to press claims for needed investments, or pushing aside the presumed directionality of Global North-South knowledge production and interventions, co-produced policy ideas promise to further the equity aims of sustainable development by complementing the technical expertise of sustainability policy experts with the experiential knowledge of residents, activists, and local people.

Section overview

The chapters that follow show the potential of a co-production model to further these goals of equity, effectiveness, and efficiency in direct and indirect ways.

In their survey of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Jennifer Amparo, Clarice Pulumbarit, Ma Charisma Malenab, Ron Jay Dangcalan, Carla Edith Jimena, Maria Emilinda

Mendoza, and Emilia S. Visco distinguish between knowledge production as a place-neutral undertaking, and knowledge brokering as an intentional and locally rooted process of academic inquiry and service. In foregrounding an integrative approach to community engagement, the chapter shows how sustainability research can help prioritize the interests and needs of regions, taking their local histories and social-ecological context into account.

Lisa Hoffman and Mary Hanneman present just such a contextualized example, writing about the land use and social development history of downtown Tacoma, Washington, USA and the Commencement Bay tideflats, directly adjacent to the urban-serving campus of the University of Washington, Tacoma. In an interdisciplinary exploration of ethnic displacement and urban redevelopment, these scholars use their knowledge brokering role to add needed complexity to understandings of space and place, creating discursive room for more inclusive planning and engagement, going forward.

Next, Gerard Sandoval, Citlali Sosa-Riddell, and Ada Sosa-Riddell show how locally embedded leaders used their place-based understandings, regional and statewide connections, and shared values to success their ends to gain more practical amenities and neighborhood focus in the transit-oriented development (TOD) projects being implemented in California, USA. In three different cities, Chicana women drew on existing knowledge and networks, and mobilized across scales to elevate and justify the kind of investments that would make the most difference to communities in specific urban neighborhoods, making transportation sustainability about more than engineering.

In her chapter on China's rural migration and urban resettlement, explored in detail through a case study in Shanghai, Shuping Zhang shows how the interface between residential experiences and cultural contexts requires adjustment and alignment. Even within the same country, migrants must learn to navigate new institutional arrangements whose relational norms are different, and perhaps opaque, between city and countryside, formal and informal systems of resource distribution and other forms of security and well-being. For neighborhoods to thrive, poorly settled migrants experiencing exclusion and insufficient integration will need to be supported or trained to better contribute to the fabric of an urban community rather than left to flail and possibly impede community sustainability.

The potential to think proactively and strategically about sustainable growth is also explored by Sara Padgett Kjaersgaard and Yizhao Yang's chapter on planning for Ecological Zones (EZs) in Chengdu, China. While the peri-urban has historically been treated as a "make do" place in urban and regional spatial planning, these authors point to the sustainable development promise of intentionally designed transition spaces that bring traditionally urban (dense, residential, mobile, commercial) uses into sustained interaction with more classically rural ones (naturalized, agricultural, restorative, non-commodified). Much like the need for a more sensitive and realistic approach to regional migration from rural to urban settings, carefully interspersed EZs may enable and sustain transition to a more complex global urbanism.

The global impact of urbanization is nowhere more keenly felt than coastal communities facing flood risk and extreme weather damage from climate change. Eulito Casas, Miah Pormon, Mary Yanger, and Raul Lejano take on the planning and local engagement dimensions of this problem in their chapter on how risk is communicated and understood. Coastal planners, climate scientists, and policy experts need to convey information about climate risk, and it is the residents, schoolteachers, and local students who create meaningful ways to process and retain knowledge about how to anticipate potentially disastrous events and how to respond. Relying on experiential knowledge and existing practices, local communities are able to create narratives of risk management that are sensible and actionable for them.

Michelle Montgomery's chapter, on indigenous feminist perspectives on climate justice, provides deeper explanation for the privilege that has plagued environmental knowledge systems and planning regimes. Settler colonialism continues to Other and expropriates the experience and claims of indigeneity, as a characteristic of global urbanization and its unsustainability. Bringing a critical race theory lens to both ecosystem management and predominant feminist practice – both of which are imprinted with norms of White settler colonialism – tenets that insist upon a decolonized historical analysis, and interdisciplinary indigenous knowledge that centers collective responsibility, bring the possibility of true resilience to efforts to work toward climate justice.

Finally, the multiple knowledge systems implicated in responding to crisis, climate or otherwise, are explored in the section's final chapter. During the early months of the global COVID-19 pandemic, a group of early career planning and governance scholars convened a one-day virtual event to engage practitioners, writers, organizers, and researchers in a sensemaking dialogue about the effect of the pandemic in cities. Evan Carver, Peter Dunn, Katherine Idziorek, Lan Nguyen, and Elizabeth Umbanhowar – all current or former PhD students at the University of Washington's College of Built Environments – foreground the public health and equity implications of failing to mobilize and use what we know, collectively, in order to limit disaster impacts and create shared, sustainable futures where all are able to thrive.

These chapters share a commitment to approaching planning, engagement, and sustainable development in a just, effective, and deeply co-produced way. While the authors bring very different perspectives and contexts to their work, they all suggest how co-production can support sustainable cities and landscapes.

The work of each of these chapters demonstrates the equity, effectiveness, and efficiency potentials of co-production through four, mutually reinforcing dimensions, illustrated in Figure 56.1: knowledge generation and ground truthing, sustainable development discourse, place identity, and capacity for action.

Co-production I: knowledge

Ways of knowing what is, and is not accurate and useful for the sustainable development of communities, places, and social-ecological systems will vary in different settings, and be imprinted by the power relations of that region. As knowledge is mobilized, produced, and/or suppressed, the plausible pathways for action in a particular place are also opened or foreclosed.

What counts as knowledge needs continual renewal, exploration, and testing; this can be understood as the organizing principle of empirical research in a global and inquisitive sense. What counts as knowledge is also imbued with the political and cultural biases of the systems in which it is produced, a tendency that – ironically – has given rise to more rather than less social-ecological vulnerability, reduced rather than improved sustainability, and which therefore threatens the very survival of the human species and the habitats we have manipulated.

Whose knowledge is centered, retained, and valued in planning and engagement for sustainability is a question raised and foregrounded by Montgomery's chapter on indigenous feminist leadership in environmental governance, and by Hoffman and Hanneman's chapter on memory and forgetting in Tacoma, among others. By empowering a full and accurate accounting of the institutional histories, displacements, and ongoing contributions of communities that have been continually marginalized in the development of space and governance

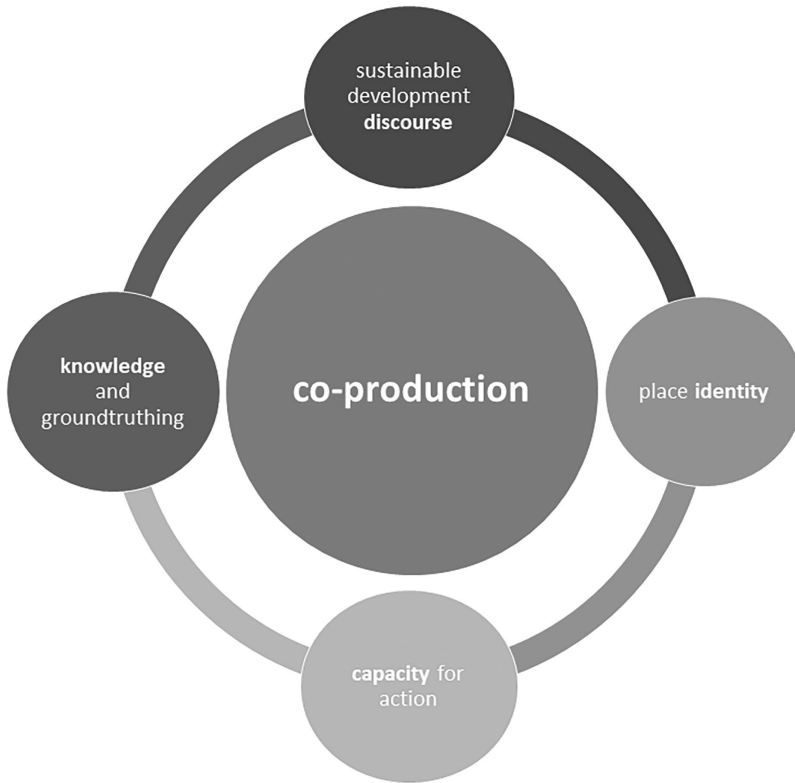


Figure 56.1 Co-production in planning and engagement for sustainable development

of place, critical perspectives hold corrective potential for the very groups who have held power and perpetrated harm, and are now struggling for sustainable futures.

Whether the knowledge we produce and venerate is effective in particular places will depend upon the relevance and responsiveness to the people who live there. Zhang's chapter on residential resettlement in Shanghai; and Casas, Pormon, Yanger, and Lejano's chapter on knowledge of climate risk in the Philippines both illuminate the power of close ethnographic engagement with communities making sense of conditions, and adapting in order to survive. Translating between knowledge paradigms is an experiential and interactional process, and requires sensitivity to the ways that people take up and incorporate new understandings, so that there can be learning and behavioral change that is aligned with the needs of a community and thus sustainable.

Knowledge production as an exercise in efficiency is one that requires adjustments to established habits of inquiry and verification. Technically proficient and replicable datasets yield important trend insights in sustainability research, yet evaluation against the actual conditions and less visible experiences within specific settings is essential to accurate sense-making (Carp, 2008; Weick, 1995). The chapter by Carver, Dunn, Idziorek, Nguyen, and Umbanhowar shows how global crisis can create opportunities for planning and engagement around different publics, local questions, and communities of practice, producing new frames of understanding for long-established disciplinary networks and research pathways in urban and regional sustainability.

Co-production II: discourse

The power of discourse in sustainability policy and practice is well established (Dryzek, 1997; Hajer, 1995), and planning theory has long acknowledged the role of narrative in shaping action (Sandercock, 1998; Throgmorton, 1992). In these chapters, one finds the critical potentials of a heterogeneous reading of discourse and narrative brought to the fore, where the performative enactment of certain storylines and possibilities, over and against others, creates policy space for people to empower themselves into more just and sustainable futures.

In their presentation of Chicana feminist narratives of neighborhood activism in California, Sandoval, Sosa-Riddell, and Sosa-Riddell demonstrate how networks of advocacy and resource mobilization were constructed to insist on the investments most important to local residents, in the creation of new TODs. Similarly, when Montgomery formulates anti-racist tenets of environmental governance, rooted in indigenous feminist practices of resistance and leadership, she establishes a re-ordering of knowledge and priorities that centers the reality of oppression and ecological destruction across the Pacific Rim.

Discourse is one of the main targets of the event undertaken and explored in Carver et al.'s chapter; by convening a virtual gathering focused on pandemic urbanism, in the midst of a global health crisis, the authors unsettle and draw new connections around how public health, community vulnerability, and urban planning are related. And for Hoffman and Hanneman, reformulation of the public history of Japanese presence and erasure in Tacoma is not just an exercise in narrative restitution, but the chance to surface already-negotiated and experienced alliances among migrants, settlers, and natives experiences that may offer instructive examples for economic solidarity and spatial co-existence.

By creating a sense of relevance and urgency around new or different realities, discourse can shape policy action to become more intentional and responsive to the demands of sustainable development. When Casas and co-authors describe the construction of climate knowledge, in their work with coastal communities facing sea level rise and extreme weather events, they identify the narratives that are co-created by residents and experts as essential to understanding risk and organizing response. And in Padgett Kjaersgaard and Yang's presentation of EZs in Chengdu, the peri-urban becomes less an outcome, and more an intentional development space, an overdue discursive move for shaping the planning action of rapidly developing Chinese cities. In both cases the scientific knowledge and policy goals of global sustainability experts, whether climate data or the UN Habitat framework and SDGs, require discourse to aid their uptake and implementation.

Co-production III: identity

As identity is claimed and refined, the space for action and its directionality are also given life. When people see themselves in the definition of a place or purpose, they can help shape response to a shared challenge or interpret an emergent reality. The structure of history and the physical reality of regions inform the identity of places and their people – as do the contestations of oppression, suppression, conflict, and migration. As the complexity of these realities becomes more salient, the ability to surface and act upon priorities that we have for ourselves is a construction of self, other, sites, and collective endeavor (Taufen Wessells & Lejano, 2017).

In the chapter on HEIs and sustainability engagement, Jennifer Amparo and co-authors describe knowledge brokering as being more specific and targeted than production. In order to broker knowledge, HEIs must be in a position to match the unique strengths and needs

of their region, with the expertise of their faculty, drawing on and reinforcing the identities of both. Similarly, when Chicana activists in California draw on their values, networks, and deeply held place commitments to leverage connections and press claims (Sandoval et al.), they mobilize identity to secure investments in public infrastructure for themselves and their communities.

In chapters by Montgomery and by Zhang, norms that are held in place by dominant systems of governance are sometimes at odds with the values and priorities of the identities of groups subject to their impact. In both cases, there are losses associated with collaborative governance and urban civility, for indigenous wisdom and for rural migrants, respectively, calling into question the presumed benefits of such supposed social panacea. The complex identities of space and place explored in Chengdu and in Tacoma (Padgett Kjaersgaard and Yang; Hoffman and Hanneman) suggest how reformulated understandings of peri-urban EZs and historical land uses can unsettle taken-for-granted perceptions, and empower new trajectories in site development.

The chapter on academic response to crisis (Carver et al.) is also a reflection on identity, with junior scholars implicitly asking themselves and others: who are the researchers inside and outside of academia? Who has the ability, desire, agility, and courage to respond to a pandemic; and who is willing to upend the usual routines of risk/reward, to do so? Further, who will try to act, and how, and what is needed?

Co-production IV: capacity

It is perhaps a truism to say that when we know who we are and how we make sense of the world, we can get more done. Yet this is the pragmatic and organizing rationale for taking identity and discourse seriously in policy knowledge; by ignoring or simplifying them, we reduce the capacity for action, a conceit that global sustainable development can no longer afford.

Capacity to contribute to sustainable livelihoods in our communities and social-ecological systems will require engaging realistically with the strengths and expectations that people already have for living their lives. The difficulties faced by rural migrants adjusting to urban institutions in Shanghai neighborhoods (Zhang) or by coastal communities facing flooding and disaster due to climate change (Casas et al.) bear the biases of those already in power: we often assume that people should change their behavior, heed expert warnings, interpret the science, and become technocratic foot soldiers in the new global age. Indignation that this has not yet happened does little to avert the sustainability crisis that looms, and grows; and likely speeds it along.

When our research can be used to understand and express the ways that people become co-producers of knowledge in their own cities and landscapes – as when Chicana leaders use their “middle position,” meso-level connections as a source of political power and planning strategy, to the benefit of neighborhoods and regions (Sandoval et al.); or when residents and planners create hybrid, peri-urban open spaces to meet their ecological, economic, and psycho-social needs (Padgett Kjaersgaard and Yang) – we begin to make the translations necessary for sustainability.

Using research and building from global goals and local needs to design and build for what people need, as opposed to what has become habituated and familiar throughout the era of rapid urbanization, will be essential in planning and engagement for sustainable development. Amparo and her co-authors speak to this commitment to capacity-building in their survey of HEIs positioning themselves to leverage strengths, conserve resources, partner strategically, and develop the initiatives most likely to yield impact, as sustainability scholars

throughout the Pacific Rim become increasingly thoughtful and intentional about the role of the academy in contributing to the regions where they serve as anchor institutions.

Connections

Knowledge co-production for sustainable development permits communities, regions, and broader networks of policy actors to create the kinds of programs and investments that will be workable for the people who need them. For the pursuit of themes central to APRU's Sustainable Cities and Landscapes hub, and successful implementation of the UN's SDGs (or "Global Goals"), this is especially important.

The SCL hub prioritizes three themes: city-landscape connections, equitable development, and climate change. For cities and their institutions of local and regional governance to cross ideological divides – between and among concepts of city and nature, politics of urban and rural, experiences of technology and identity – the leveling offered by a co-production model suggests pathways of learning, negotiation, and interstitial spaces of belonging and sustainable design, including profound potential for the under-appreciated and essential emergence of the peri-urban (Barry & Agyeman, 2020). Making city-landscape connections in places and regions, in ways that respect traditions and integrate interests, can help open opportunities for equitable development, reduce and right-size the consumption and production footprints driving global climate change, and adapt the current built form of regions for climate disruptions that are yet to come. Development pathways must be co-produced, at the scale of communities and regions, to sustain the place-bound viability of any intervention, from urban design to smart technology to water infrastructure to energy investment.

Interpreted thus, all of the SDGs will require co-production if initiatives are to be wisely construed and successfully implemented. This is most convincingly captured by the elevation of governance institutions and inclusive process as a development goal, unto itself; and to the emphasis on partnerships and implementation capacity, as an additional, stand-alone goal. SDG 16, "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions," and SDG 17, "Partnerships for the Goals," signal interrelated aspects of co-production. Formal institutions and their reliability in protecting the rights and life chances of people in regions around the world; and resourcing partnerships to fund and steward implementation capacity in actual, and different places will, by necessity, look different and take various forms in practical examples and success stories. This is exemplified by identifying the "partnership enabling ecosystem" to accelerate the SDGs through the creation of multi-stakeholder collaboration (Stibbe & Prescott, 2020); and the work of the UN partnership accelerator and ongoing identification of best practices (UNDESA, 2020) show the importance of co-production in supporting each of the 17 goals.

Conclusion

When SDG 11, "Make Cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable," identifies rapid urbanization as one of the realities of global sustainability, it clarifies the need for resilience to be found and cultivated in the place-based relationships that people experience and rely on for their day-to-day livelihoods, sustenance, and well-being. Policy and planning prescriptions that fail to take this into account, no matter how scientifically accurate and globally compelling, will not be taken up and implemented without the on-the-ground institutionalization that enables people to connect and identify with the future they are expected to help create. The future must be connected to the present and to the past; to the ways of knowing

and public reason (Taufen Wessells, 2017) that people value in particular places, and which motivate and sustain communities in the actions they take.

Co-production for sustainable development is an ambitious global agenda for networks of policy activists, advocates, and scholars. By attending to the ways that knowledge, discourse, and identity contribute to and sustain capacity for action, and work together in co-production, in specific ways in particular places, the universal imperatives of environmentally just and economically sustainable cities and landscapes can be made practical and real.

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