4

The Engaged State: Bringing Citizens In

The role of the citizen in the world of New Public Management was centred around the 'customer' of public services because of the strong marketization dimension to the reforms. The interaction between public officials, professionals, street-level bureaucrats and citizens was mediated through market-based mechanisms. Central governments started to delegate public provision responsibilities to social actors, associations and NGOs through market or quasi-market arrangements (Le Grand, 2007). Market accountability was an important component of the relationship between state provision and society. The relationship between society and citizens was at arm's-length. For instance, this was reflected in the public policy approaches to science and society at the European level. The European Commission's *Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate* (European Commission, 2005) promoted a top-down type of societal accountability which entailed listening to citizens' needs in a hierarchical environment of decision-making. Until recently, society was kept away from the core activities of the state, as Chapter Three discussed at length. NPM was exemplified by performance contracts, outsourcing arrangements and managed competition, with limited participation of citizens, who were customers. The role of citizen was articulated in that of the consumer who can exercise the 'exit' option (Hirschman, 1970).

The co-production model proposed by Carayannis et al (2012), picked up at an early stage by the Knowledge Exchange Framework of the Research Council UK is at the heart of the policy change

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directed towards the adoption of public engagement for research. Co-production stands on very different premises than the traditional linear view of the process of knowledge creation; instead, it is a dialogic approach whereby stakeholders are integrated at each stage of the research project (Dordoni and Van Hooft, 2004). Traditional mechanisms, starting with basic research and ending with application, have particularly been challenged in the social sciences, and we increasingly need nonlinear and flexible procedures (LERU, 2017). Gibbons maintains that knowledge production cannot be separate from context or practice (Gibbons et al, 1994; Gibbons, 1999). The co-production of knowledge is intrinsically transdisciplinary and allows for the integration of different approaches, societal demands and interests.

In this chapter, we will discuss the concept of citizen science, and then zoom in to explore its application to the practice of ecological citizenship, which has received much attention today. For instance, the ecological citizen is 'engaged' in climate change action. She is not only a passive participant in knowledge production, but engages directly in the safeguarding of the environment (Whitmarsh, 2011). Ecological citizenship is a form of public engagement (Dobson and Bell, 2005; Horton, 2005; Jagers, 2009) and governments are setting out policies to incentivize citizens' involvement in ecological projects, with a view also to change their behaviour. UNESCO has recommended that environmental citizenship courses be mandatory in schools, as a key instrument to implement the Sustainability Development Goals. UNESCO Green Citizens programme, for instance, facilitates the dissemination of information about practices that mobilize citizens to protect biodiversity, ocean literacy, indigenous knowledge, and others.[1]

Citizen science

NGOs and civil society have taken an active role in helping governments promote their rhetoric on 'citizen science' (Bonney et al, 2014; Irwin, 2015; Woolley et al, 2016), a broad umbrella term that applies to a wide range of research projects that involve laypeople and the general public in science. Citizen science represents a paradigm shift in recent decades promoted by government research funding agencies and national governments.

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Woolley et al (2016) offer a granular and sophisticated understanding of citizen science and distinguish three distinct ways of involving the public in biomedical research: participation, engagement and involvement. The first conceptualizes citizens as 'subjects' of research itself. Medical care research can refer mainly to the recruitment and, sometimes, the enlisting of humans for projects. In contrast, engagement and involvement are less passive and entail an independent decision regarding inclusion in research studies. The difference between the two is a gradient of involvement, which in many cases includes citizens defining the research agenda, setting priorities, and even co-designing research questions under the supervision of scientists. Engagement and involvement are expected to increase trust and literacy in science. They also contribute to raising awareness of scientific results and heightening public enthusiasm for certain fields of research, such as genomics.

'Citizen science' has multiple and conflicting meanings, and it is far from representing a one-size-fits-all conceptualization of public involvement in science. One can distinguish between a top-down and a bottom-up approach to citizen science. The understanding of the citizen's role as a volunteer data collector comes closer to a top-down view of participation and enlisting patients. The bottom-up approach, developed by Irwin (2014), emphasizes practices that closely align with the active and direct involvement of citizens from the ground. This model favours the engagement of the lay public in the conduct and governance of research projects. It is most exemplary of the normative values of citizen science as presented in many EU documents about environmental projects, for instance. Citizens are not the subjects of research and are empowered to define the orientation and direction of science in society. The top-down approach presents a few risks when public engagement is viewed as mainly instrumental by government funding agencies; namely, it is a strategy to improve research grants and research impact without a genuine commitment to shared societal goods. In some contexts, citizen science has also been used to refer to fundraising and reaching out to philanthropists, wealthy individuals and politicians. There is thus a blurring between government strategies to improve the literacy and trust of science, viewed as a collective societal good, and vested interests and specific research priorities over others. As Woolley et al note: 'It is very attractive to governments interested

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in propelling labour and data-intensive research in a cost-efficient manner' (2016: 5).

What does citizen means in 'citizen science' then? Rosanvallon (2008) in his conception of 'counter-democracy' posits that the idea of citizenship and participation involves three dimension of interaction: first, democracy of expression, whereby society has a voice in the relationship with the state; second, democracy of involvement, when citizens join together and take part in associational life; third, democracy by intervention characterized by collective action to obtain results and influence public policy and public debates. Rosanvallon distinguishes between expression as voice, on one hand, and active citizenship whereby the citizens join up and take collective action. This concept comes close to 'co-governance for accountability', defined and advocated by John Ackerman (2004). This is not a hierarchical type of control, but citizens directly engage with the state and oblige government to answer for their actions directly through participation (Yang and Callahan, 2007). The author argues that co-governance moves beyond exit and voice to establish a direct interaction between public officials and citizens, and invite society into the inner chambers of decision-making. Thus, opening up core activities of the state to societal participation is one of the most effective way to improve accountability and governance. Likewise, Goetz and Jenkins (2001) sustain that a full co-governance relationship between citizens and the state entails full participation and openness to citizens' direct involvement in the process of decision-making. These scholars advocate for public engagement upstream, namely during the early design phase of a policy.

Collaborative governance in the new millennium and citizens as co-producers

The new millennium is characterized by a shift towards a new model of public governance centred around the interaction and cooperation between state and non-state actors by public–private mixes and by processes of civic engagement (Mayntz, 1998; Ackerman, 2004). In the new model, the role of the citizen is elevated to co-producer and activist (Hupe, 2022). There is a differentiation between the 'old' traditional roles citizens played in

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their encounter with public officials and the state (as voters, as rule followers and as beneficiaries of public services and social services), and the 'new' role that collaborative governance entails (Brandsen et al, 2018). Government agencies, public and private providers of social services, have moved participatory governance up on their discursive agenda to the extent that 'participation' has become a golden value and recipe for good governance. It is viewed positively by public officials and politicians because it reduces costs and makes unpopular financial cuts more legitimate. It is also a way to offload public service provisions, or some aspects of it, to NGOs and civil society associations with specific expertise. Thus, participation and co-governance arrangements moved the state in the direction of openness to society (Evans, 1996).

The co-production literature in the management field does not always distinguish sufficiently the customer from the citizen as co-producer, though there are fundamental differences between the two. The customer or client is someone who engages with public agencies and collaborates to deliver public services, and this occurs for private interests and a personal and private benefit. For instance, a social security beneficiary and recipient engages with government to receive a private and individualized product. However, citizens engage with public organizations as co-producers as part of a collective community and to promote societal good. A citizen acts as part of a collective community then. This differentiation matters insofar as motivations to co-produce are different and multiple, and rarely studied in the theories of co-production (Alford, 2009). The literature concentrates on efficiency and quality that co-production of delivery of services may yield (Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006), but less so on the real effects of such arrangements on trust in government and public authorities. In fact, recent research shows that little or no causal effect of co-production is evident in experimental surveys (Dudau et al, 2019). Further research is needed to assess the impact on public trust originated by citizens' engagement with co-production arrangements. In other words, how effective is public engagement with climate change in reducing carbon emissions, for instance?

For citizens to best respond to legislators' intentions and possibly change their behaviour and attitudes, models of public engagement should be designed with an orientation towards the perspectives

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of the communities targeted by the policies enacted. In this way, it is possible to move from a top-down model of public policies produced to obtain 'results' useful only to policy makers and politicians, to a model designed to obtain 'outcomes' desired and supported by citizens (Bovaird and Loffler, 2011). Therefore, the policy-making cycle is no longer perceived as a 'top-down' process but increasingly a negotiation between several actors in the political system in which the end-users demand a greater role in the co-production of public goods (Bovaird, 2007). Several countries have experimented with examples of public policy co-production with local communities, and many authors have analysed these experiences in light of the increasing salience the phenomenon is achieving (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Edwards, 2001; Berry, 2005; Cooper et al, 2006; Heikkila and Isett, 2007; Yang and Callahan, 2007; Pestoff, 2009; Fung, 2015). Authors such as Ackerman (2004) advocate a co-governance model, compared to a co-production one, as the best possible one to promote civic engagement and draw on the best resources that civil society can offer. A public engagement model able to involve these actors would indeed also aim to achieve more inclusive results (van der Linden et al, 2015; Reed et al, 2017).

The ecological citizen

It is undeniable that environmental protection and the fight against climate change are taking on increasing salience almost everywhere. The media attention on natural disasters and ecological events has also prompted the international community to take action, promoting alternative models of sustainable development and valuable assets to be disseminated and spread, especially among the younger population. The 2030 agenda produced by the UN, inter-governmental conferences such as COP26, COP27, and various international treaties, along with purely economic and industrial interests, pose crucial challenges to governmental elites committed to educating the public. What the EU has done through the European Green Deal is highly innovative in this respect (European Commission, 2019). The Commission has not only provided several investment packages aimed at the ecological transition but has also promoted many initiatives aimed at stimulating public engagement

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in the cause it advocates. Through the European Climate Pact, people, communities and organizations are stimulated to participate in the climate actions promoted by the institutions.

The European Commission has promoted a variety of new citizens' initiatives and organized engagement activities with science and innovation to build institutional capacity in the area of public engagement. These represent resources and opportunities to consolidate social and cultural capital. For instance, the Climate Pact aims to engage civil society in the green transition of the EU by spreading awareness and supporting citizen initiatives. The Climate Pact is a European Commission initiative promoted within the framework of the European Green Deal and announced by the European Commission in December 2020 (European Commission, 2020). The main aim of the Pact is to engage stakeholders and civil society in the green transition of the EU; it invites people, communities and organizations to participate in climate action to build a greener Europe and to encourage, listen to and support initiatives at the local level. The action of the Pact is based on two main pillars: the spread of public awareness and the support of action within civil society.

Awareness about the existence of climate change through the acquisition of scientific knowledge is considered one of the most important assets for civil society to embrace the transition and to translate science into options for everyday action (European Commission, 2020). Misinformation, incorrect ideas and climate denial are believed to be mitigated by spreading scientific awareness about climate change and the need to take immediate action to transition towards sustainable societies. To spread awareness, the Commission also believes in the need to bring people together and in the power of sharing information. In this sense, the Pact helps to spread awareness by fostering open dialogue based on scientific evidence. The Commission will make available a variety of communication materials accessible at schools, homes and workplaces.

While the Pact spreads awareness as much as possible, it also embraces the wide aim of encouraging democratic, science-based, transparent, locally grounded, inclusive and long-lasting action (European Commission, 2020). The most encouraged and supported types of action are those that involve sustainability,

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social wellbeing, inclusion, equality, diversity, accessibility and affordability, especially for participants who aim to reach the most vulnerable individuals and areas. One of the ways to enable the centrality of citizens' engagement has been to provide open public consultations. The first open public consultations were held to help shape the Pact and were open from March 2020 to June 2020. The Commission received more than 3,500 replies from citizens in all 27 EU member states (European Commission, 2020). More than 80 per cent of respondents to the public consultation declared that they were interested in making a climate action commitment. In June 2020, the first EU Climate Pact webinar was held to give organizations an opportunity to learn about the Pact.[2] Approximately 130 actors representing grassroots initiatives, private companies, NGOs and public institutions participated in a preliminary discussion on how to shape the Pact. Participants highlighted that the Pact could be a bridge between initiatives, an aggregator, a resource and platform for collaboration, a network to support grassroots initiatives, especially by youth, an enabler of action by groups and individuals, a source of knowledge on climate change and climate action, and a coordinator highlighting interconnections between sectors and initiatives. Several countries are changing their national constitutions to promote the value of environmental protection and, in some cases like Italy, to prevent it from conflicting with private economic initiatives, putting the former before the latter. There are about 90 countries that provide for environmental protection in their constitutions, of which about 30–40 even provide for procedural environmental rights (Daly, 2012). Even though in some countries constitutional change has not yet taken place, however, there is a strong production of norms and laws aimed at introducing these principles and educating future citizens on these issues.

Thus, one can consider 'environmental citizenship' a civic responsibility that every citizen in the world should care about (UNEP, 2002). In the scientific literature the ecological citizen has certain qualities: she is aware of the critical issues that affect the surrounding environment and others; has relevant knowledge and information on climate change; can recognize the causal links between environmental problems and individual behaviour; and, consequently, takes courses of action that are not harmful to

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the environment and others (Dobson, 2007; Dono et al, 2010). Consequently, the principal aim of environmental citizenship education programmes is to develop these skills and knowledge to support behaviour and attitudes that are conducive to environmental protection (Dietz et al, 2002; Gunningham, 2017).

Ecological citizenship, as defined by the work of Dobson, is clearly a nontraditional theory of citizenship, that eludes the territorial dimensions of the concept (Dobson and Bell, 2005). It emphasize duties to protect the environment over individual rights. It has a strong normative value intrinsic to it, that stems from caring for others, for local communities and for environmental sustainability. Ecological citizenship is therefore a conception of a citizen whose behaviour is motivated by a set of values originating in the cognitive, affective and behavioural realm.

We can therefore try to define ecological citizenship as the status *achieved* by citizens with a strong sense of ecological justice, who recognize the consequences of their actions and those of others, who are deeply committed to changing their lifestyles in a manner consistent with the proposed goal of safeguarding the environment, and who are personally active in influencing the courses of action of others. Borrowing a concept from Heater (1999), we can define environmental citizenship as *parallel* citizenship to the national one, because it does not replace it, but complements it. It adds rights and duties to national citizenship because it imposes, in some cases not only ethically but also legally, civic and moral duties. Moreover, it also guarantees rights, such as the right to live in an unpolluted environment, to breathe clean air and drink uncontaminated water; it guarantees free access to the accessible biome within the borders of one's state with the duty not to deplete it; it allows the citizen to hope for a future with a less severe climate impact on one's lifestyle and economic activities, and numerous other rights (and duties) that we will not list now.

However, returning to the parallelism between citizenships, it would be appropriate to ask ourselves how environmental and national citizenships can complement each other without creating friction and prevarication. Some authors now speak of the so-called emergence of 'eco-states', that is, states that recognize environmental and ecological issues as a crucial point in their policies and laws (Koch and Fritz, 2014; Jakobsson et al, 2017). Others, instead,

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recognize a nascent synergy between social and environmental policies, in which case they speak of 'eco-social' policies (Krieger, 2012; Mandelli, 2022).

Youth public engagement with sustainability

Education is seen as the preparation of students for participation in society as future adult citizens, thus requiring the proper civic knowledge for political and voting participation and the improvement of democratic aptitude (Lawy and Biesta, 2006). A common trait is the implementation of teaching with communal and experimenting educational activities, thus enabling the establishment of social practices that reinforce the self-perception of being a citizen. The school is the place to accumulate this set of democratic experiences and to reflect on them in addition to others acquired elsewhere (Daniels, 2002). Citizenship education should be based precisely on these concepts of reflecting on social practices and experimenting with others (Geboers et al, 2013).

Citizenship is essentially regarded as a controversial and contested concept (Van Gunsteren, 1998). Enslin (2000) defines citizenship in a democracy as the requirement for membership status for individuals within a political unit that guarantees an identity for individuals and constitutes a set of values that are often interpreted as fundamental to functioning and belonging to the state. It also assists individuals in participating in the political processes of common life and allows the acquisition and internalization of laws, procedures and norms that regulate private life. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) define and distinguish three types of citizens: responsible citizens, participative citizens and social justice-oriented citizens. Westheimer (2008), again, speaks of 'good citizenship' as the character of citizens who are prepared to make their critical evaluations from different perspectives, ready to explore strategies for change and who make people think about concepts of justice, inequalities and democratic participation in the *res publica*. However, the social dimension of citizens remains the lowest common denominator of most of the proposed definitions, especially concerning citizenship in youth and citizenship education for the citizens of tomorrow.

A common thought among the public and policy makers identified by several authors is that the status of citizen is bestowed

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following the attainment and fulfilment of certain requirements (Davies, 1987; Jones and Wallace, 1992; France, 1998). Usually, these requirements relate to the duties arising from the determination of citizenship, suggesting that there are made and accomplished citizens and citizens in the making. The largest category within the set of not-yet-citizens is certainly that of the young, individuals who are not fully educated and lack some of the rights (and duties) typical of adults and who need to be educated, according to the ruling elites, in the use of these. One of the practical reasons why policy makers opt to target these civic education programmes at young people certainly relates to the ease of access and involvement of this category compared to adults, who are free of educational obligations in most states (Smith et al, 2020). However, this promotes a deficit model of citizenship in educational programmes in many school systems (Osler and Starkey, 2003).

Crick (1998), speaking of citizenship education for young people, describes the three pillars that any educational programme should have: first, an education in moral and social responsibility, since children must learn to relate to their peers and authorities. Second, nurture for participation in the community, understood as spontaneous, active and sincere, recognizing this as an essential requirement for a society to function. Finally, political literacy is the last step to being able to step out of the protected school environment and be ready to interface with authorities and wider social contexts. Crick (1998) again states, therefore, that citizenship education cannot and must not be a mere transfer of knowledge about society and the constitution but must teach crucial social values and skills.

Lawy and Biesta (2006) strongly criticize the notion that citizenship is a goal to be achieved and not a status automatically conferred on all individuals, young and old, belonging to the community. The authors, therefore, propose a change from a model of citizenship-as-achievement to one of citizenship-as-practice, in which young people are no longer seen as empty vessels to be filled with civic education curricula, but are to be educated through practices of active socialization in public life to their responsibilities as already citizens ready to exercise their upcoming rights. As long as we persist in considering citizenship as an achievement reached by possessing specific requirements, then young people will always

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be excluded from this definition. In a longitudinal study conducted over eight years, Kerr (2005) explains that the citizenship learning process in young people is influenced by numerous factors that make it difficult to assess the effectiveness of citizenship education programmes per se. The teaching environment is made up of school, family, class composition and socioeconomic background, actors interacting with students such as teachers, parents and friends and other contingent factors that can influence learning processes and outcomes.

An analysis conducted by Biesta et al (2009) on a small sample of English students between 2003 and 2005 also shows similar results, underlining how the context of the reference is of fundamental importance when evaluating the effects of such educational curricula. In particular, they highlight the importance of increasing children's involvement in 'adult' social life and the exercise of citizenship values from adolescence onwards, if not earlier. In a review study of 28 selected articles on the effects of citizenship teaching curricula on school-age children, Geboers et al (2013) explain that the results are quite mixed and unable to identify a clear-cut trajectory on which teaching practices are most effective and advisable. The authors point out, however, that the most pronounced effects were seen in school contexts that were open to dialogue and discussion and, above all, in the presence of formally and precisely instituted curricula.

Conclusions

Participatory governance is effective in fostering government accountability and responsiveness (Heikkila and Isett, 2007). When citizens are directly involved in the decision-making process jointly with public officials, the mechanism of holding to account is direct and marks a point of departure from top-down hierarchies. However, it is unlikely that all citizens will be able to exercise their new role as co-producer of public services. Some may not have the resources, the skills to participate, or may simply lack the motivation to do so. Thus, the assumption that citizens will be motivated to co-produce and that they will do so fruitfully remains to be empirically investigated further with case studies on local level operational governance (Hill and Hupe, 2022).

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Another critical issue is the ground-level problem of interpreting public engagement simply as communication strategies, instead of engagement with society. In the field of sustainability and development, firms and organizations are encouraged to design Sustainability Communication Plans, which differ from real participatory mechanisms with society. They seem rhetorical tools to gain legitimacy and obtain public funding for communication initiatives. Unfortunately absent in every dialogue about public engagement is serious debate on how the decision-making process is influenced by citizens, and how their feedback and input are used by public officials in designing and implementing policy programmes. There is a need to explore and investigate further in the future how the input of citizens as co-producers is used by organizations, by politicians and public officials. In a recent European Commission assessment of nanotechnologies, for instance, most of the engagement activities surveyed fell short of citizens' control and closer to manipulation (MASIS Expert Group, 2009).

In the next chapter, the author explores the case study of educational initiatives aimed at making the provision of 'environmental citizenship' compulsory in all schools as a way to form the ecological citizen and foster collaborative co-production of knowledge about sustainability with schools. The discussion of this case is justified by the central role that educational institutions play in the interaction between science and society. Schools are key institutions and centres of knowledge production and diffusion at the local level in specific context. The target audience of many public engagement activities and 'working with schools' programmes is students, teachers, parents and local communities (see NCCPE, 2017). Almond and Verba (1989) in their seminal work, *The Civic Culture*, attribute a central role to education as a variable of public engagement. It is widely accepted in the literature on public engagement that educational initiatives have a positive impact on all forms of civic engagement, as they build normative values of caring for others and the environment. Putnam (2000) argued that education is one of the most important conditions of many forms of social participation and it is a powerful predictor of civic engagement.

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