

2015 Seminar Series

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Co-production in Public Policy – Feasibility and Prospects

Dr Liz Richardson

Date

Thursday 26 February

Time

11.30am – 1pm

Venue

EB.2.21 Parramatta (South
Campus)

Abstract

This seminar will present a case for more co-productive approaches to policy, based on the forthcoming book by Catherine Durose and Liz Richardson, *Designing Public Policy for Co-production*, published November 2015 by The Policy Press. There are many complex public policy issues faced by modern societies, which some have called ‘wicked’ or ‘squishy’ problems. Conventional technocratic models of public policy and governance have often failed to handle these in ways that adequately manage competing interests. This has prompted many around the world to attempt to craft better ways of handling collective policy dilemmas. Drawing on twelve compelling international contributions from practitioners, policy-makers, activists and actively engaged academics, we advance co-production as an alternative. Their innovations come in many forms, but have some core common features: value-driven; grounded in experience and a range of forms of expertise; citizen-orientated; flexible and iterative. However, proponents of alternative policy designs face many tensions and dilemmas, including how to manage the risks of co-option, balancing respect for difference with the need for consensus in situations of conflicting values, and whether they can move beyond the category of ‘inspiring but marginal’. There are many questions about how we can make co-productive policy alternatives a reality through facilitation, relationships, and institutional structures.

We use a heuristic framework centred about different notions of power in policy-making, and the contrasting ‘visions’ and ‘grammars’ of constituted versus constitutive policy designs. This work explores how genuine democratic involvement in the policy process from those outside the elites of politics can shape society for the better. We present insights on why and how to generate change in policy processes. The aim of the work is to advance experimentation in policy design.

Biography

Liz Richardson is Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Manchester. Her work is dedicated to trying out ways in which academics, practitioners, and citizens can develop more democratic and participatory ways of doing politics. Her work has been published in a number of journals including *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Environment and Planning*, and *Policy and Politics*. She advises British central government, and a number of British local governments. Liz’s new book co-authored with Catherine Durose, *Designing Public Policy for Co-production*, is published by Policy Press in Autumn 2015.