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Suzuki, K.; Noda, Yu

Citation

Suzuki, K. (2025). Local government and citizen co-production through neighborhood associations. In Y. Noda (Ed.), *Local and Urban Governance* (pp. 153-168). Cham: Springer Nature. doi:10.1007/978-3-031-77322-8_8

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Chapter 8

Local Government and Citizen Co-production through Neighborhood Associations

Kohei Suzuki

Abstract

This chapter explores co-production practices of local governments, focusing on the role of neighborhood associations (NHAs) in Japan. This chapter investigates the overall research question of this book: how to enhance government performance under resource constraints, by focusing on the concept of citizen co-production. Historically, NHAs have played a significant role in supplementing municipal service provisions as co-producers for local governments. Despite the rich history of NHAs and their contributions to public service delivery at the municipal level, theoretical and empirical studies on NHAs and co-production practices remain limited. This chapter aims to address this research gap by exploring the following research questions: What are NHAs from a perspective of citizen co-production? What are the potential contributions of studying NHAs to the broader theory of co-production? What are the future research agendas? The chapter provides an overview of the origin and evolution of the co-production concept. It then examines the main characteristics and activities of NHAs and discusses their roles in supplementing local public service provision. Finally, the chapter proposes potential research agendas to advance studies on co-production using Japan as a case study.

Keywords Citizens, Local governments, Co-production, Neighborhood associations, Collaborative governance

This is an author version of the book chapter, "Local Government and Citizen Co-production Through Neighborhood Associations", published in *Local Governance in Japan*. Please cite the following reference when using this article

Suzuki, Kohei. 2024. "Local Government and Citizen Co-production Through Neighborhood Associations." In *Local Governance in Japan*, edited by Yu Noda, 153-168. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

8.1 Introduction

Despite limited administrative resources, Japanese local governments have handled a greater volume of administrative activities and tasks compared to their counterparts in other OECD countries, as discussed in chapter 1. The financial crisis since the late 2000s and demographic changes have further strained local governments' finances while increasing demands for public services. For many OECD member countries' governments facing fiscal challenges, one solution to maintain public services in the face of declining resources is to strategically devolve responsibility for these services to local actors, including voluntary organizations and communities (Suzuki, 2020). However, what may be less known outside of Japan is that entrusting government roles and functions, including the provision of public services, to local private organizations such as neighborhood associations (NHAs) has been a key feature of Japanese public administration since the post-war period (Hidaka, 2015; Mori, 2008; Muramatsu, 1997; Pekkanen, 2009). This practice has been deeply rooted in the Japanese administrative system for decades, serving as a crucial strategy for local governments to effectively manage their responsibilities and maintain public service delivery.

Local governments in Japan have actively collaborated with NHAs to supplement their human and financial resources and carry out various administrative tasks and public service delivery activities. Despite the long-standing practice of collaboration between local governments and NHAs in Japan, English language research on this topic remains limited (Pekkanen, 2009; Van Houwelingen, 2012). Furthermore, although the concept of co-production was introduced in Japan as early as 1990 and has been extensively studied in Japanese research and practice (Kotagiri, 2018), there is a scarcity of English language studies that utilize Japanese cases in the field of public administration and management, with only a few exceptions.¹ This suggests a need for greater communication and exchange of ideas between Japanese and English language research communities on these topics.

The limited exchange of ideas between Japanese and English language research communities is unfortunate, particularly in light of the growing academic interest in the significance of contextual factors and the development of global public administration and management knowledge (Beagles et al., 2019; Bhuiyan & Perry, 2024; Milward et al., 2016; O'Toole Jr & Meier, 2015; Peci & Fornazin, 2017; Roberts, 2018, 2021; Suzuki & Hur,

¹ Several studies (written in English) have considered related concepts such as citizen volunteering and civil society (Avenell 2010, Haddad 2006, 2011, 2020, Schoppa 2012), social capital at the local level (Aldrich 2012, Fraser 2021, Fraser and Aldrich 2021, Van Houwelingen 2012), citizen participation (Aoki 2018, Uddin et al. 2019), and grassroots groups and non-profit organizations (Okada et al. 2017, Pekkanen 2006, 2009, Pekkanen and Tsujinaka 2008). However, comparatively little effort has focused on the application of co-production concept in the Japanese context. Examples of studies on co-production or collaborative governance include but are not limited to Aoki (2014, 2015), Ben-Ari (1990), Dollery et al. (2020), Kinoshita et al. (2020), Ohta (2020), Pestoff (2021), Suzuki (2017), Suzuki et al. (2021), Yamazaki et al. (2022).

2020). By incorporating insights from understudied countries, researchers can refine and further develop established theories and concepts while also testing their external validity (Toshkov, 2016). This lack of dialogue represents a missed opportunity to advance our understanding of co-production in diverse contexts and to build a more comprehensive and globally relevant body of knowledge in the field.

This chapter focuses on NHAs, which have played a significant role in supporting local governments to sustain public service provisions and local communities. The primary purpose of this chapter is to expand the collective knowledge of co-production by connecting Japan's experience with the scholarly discussions on this concept in the international academic community. This chapter aims to address this research gap by exploring the following research questions: What are the NHAs from a perspective of citizen co-production? What are the potential contributions of studying NHAs to the broader theory of co-production? What are the future research agendas? The chapter consists of three parts. First, it provides a brief overview of the origin and development of the concept of co-production. Second, it reviews the main characteristics and activities of NHAs and discusses their roles in supplementing local public service provisions. Finally, the chapter discusses potential research agendas for theory development and testing of co-production using Japan as a case study.

8.2 Co-production Research

8.2.1 Origins and Development of Co-production

Coproduction is a concept that describes the collaboration between citizens and government in the joint production of public services. The concept was developed and first applied in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Dr. Elinor Ostrom, Dr. Vincent Ostrom, and their colleagues at Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis in the United States (Brudney, 1984; Nabatchi et al., 2017; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1979; Parks et al., 1981; Percy 1983, Sharp 1980, Whitaker 1980). During this period, many large central cities in the United States faced various challenges, including demographic shifts, land-development trends, economic downturns, stagflation, and political issues (Justice & Scorsone, 2013). State and local governments experienced pressure to provide more services while dealing with budget constraints, leading to a shift in budgeting practices and the emergence of research on cutback management and organizational decline (Levine, 1978, 1979; Plerhoples & Scorsone, 2013; Raudla et al., 2015).

Amidst these developments, co-production gained popularity as an innovative approach to public service delivery. By involving citizens in the production of public services, co-production was seen as a way to address the challenge of providing more services with limited resources (Brudney & England, 1983). Engaging citizens as partners in service delivery offered a means to maintain or even improve service levels while effectively

managing costs. The emergence of co-production as a topic of interest in public administration research during this period can be attributed to its potential to address the challenges faced by state and local governments. As scholars and practitioners sought new ways to deliver public services in an era of fiscal constraints and increased demands, co-production presented a promising alternative to traditional service delivery models.

Since its introduction, scholarly interest in co-production has fluctuated (Nabatchi et al., 2017). While co-production quickly gained momentum and inspired groundbreaking research in the late 1970s and 1980s (Brudney & England, 1983; Percy, 1984 & Sharp, 1980, Whitaker, 1980), its progress seemed to stall in the 1990s and early 2000s due to several factors, including the rise of New Public Management (NPM) as the dominant paradigm in public administration (Brudney, 2021; Nabatchi et al., 2017). NPM, which focuses on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations, views citizens as clients or customers of public services rather than partners of government, as the co-production approach does. Under NPM, governments were advised to view their citizens as customers and to aim for more professional, efficient, effective, and customer- and result-oriented public management (Brudney, 2021; Hood, 1991; Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020). This shift in how citizens were perceived under the NPM framework likely diverted scholarly attention away from co-production during the 1990s, even if it did not entirely suppress interest in the concept (Brudney, 2021; Nabatchi et al., 2017).

However, in recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in co-production among scholars and practitioners due to several factors. The emergence of “new governance” (Rhodes, 1996; Salamon, 2000) and “collaborative governance” (McGuire, 2006; Ansell and Gash, 2008) approaches has played a significant role in this revival. These approaches emphasize a pluralistic model of public service that relies on interorganizational relationships, networks, collaborative partnerships, and other forms of multi-actor policy making and public action. Additionally, the global financial crisis has compelled governments worldwide to reduce public services and spending, leading scholars to re-examine co-production as a potential avenue for cost savings. Furthermore, the weakening notion of citizenship and the associated decline in social capital have prompted a search for innovative public service delivery mechanisms that aim to reinvigorate the role of citizens in their communities, moving beyond their limited roles as voters and customers (Nabatchi et al., 2017).²

8.2.2 Roles of Citizens as Co-producers of Public services

² See also Brudney (2021) for history of co-production research. See also Sicilia et al. (2019), Palumbo and Manesh (2023), and Voorberg et al. (2015) for systematic reviews and recent development in the co-production literature.

The concept of co-production emphasizes the proactive roles of citizens as producers of public services rather than treating them as passive recipients or clients (Ostrom, 1996). In the late 1960s and 1970s, when co-production was first conceptualized, the dominant approach to urban service delivery treated citizens as mere consumers of public services, not as active participants. Conceptually, this model consisted of two distinct spheres: regular producers (service agents and bureaucrats) and consumers (clients, citizens, interest groups, and neighborhood associations). Producers operated within a service delivery environment shaped by public demands and support, using standard procedures to allocate goods and services. Consumers responded to the adequacy of service delivery through various means, such as making new demands, supporting or rejecting service patterns, or providing feedback (Brudney & England, 1983).

While the dominant model at that time emphasized a clear distinction between producers and consumers of public services, the co-production model envisions an overlap between these two spheres of activities and “the conjoint responsibility of lay citizens and professional government agents for the delivery of public services” (Sharp, 1980, 105). Co-production, therefore, involves “a mixing of the productive efforts of regular and consumer producers” (Parks et al., 1981, 1002). In the co-production model, citizens are considered not only consumers of public services but also active consumer-producers in public service delivery. This model recognizes that citizens have the ability to actively participate in and contribute to the delivery of local services, thereby improving both the quantity and quality of services provided by local agencies (Ostrom, 1996; Percy, 1984). In the municipal realm, co-production can be accomplished by community groups or individual residents (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). Bovaird (2007, 847) defines user and community co-production as “the provision of services through regular, long-term relationships between professionalized service providers (in any sector) and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions”.

8.2.3 Benefits of Co-production

Co-production is a distinctive approach that goes beyond traditional citizen participation methods by directly engaging citizens in the implementation of public policy alongside professionals. This approach seeks to bridge the democratic deficit in public service provision, foster greater trust in government, and ultimately result in more effective and efficient public services and programs (McMullin, 2021b). Additionally, co-production has the potential to lead to better individual well-being and citizen empowerment (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Fledderus et al., 2014; Levine & Fisher, 1984; McMullin, 2021b; Ostrom,

1996; Percy, 1984). The quality of public services is expected to improve through citizen inputs as co-producers of services.³

However, despite the premise that co-production offers various benefits, empirical evidence supporting these claims is surprisingly scarce (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2021, Brix et al., 2020). For instance, Voorberg et al. (2015) conducted a systematic review of 122 articles on co-production and found that only 24 studies reported concrete outcomes. The majority of the studies included in their review did not even aim to identify or evaluate the results of co-production. Instead, most of them focused on identifying influential factors for co-production or finding a typology of co-production, somewhat assuming that co-production leads to better outcomes.

8.2.4 Co-production and National Contexts

To the best of the author's knowledge, there is no reliable data on the coverage of studied countries in co-production research. However, the majority of existing studies still seem to focus on the United States or European countries, with studies focusing on Asia and other non-Western countries being very limited. Although there has been a growing body of research on co-production from various countries, the theoretical exploration of how co-production manifests and operates across different sectors and countries has been relatively limited. In particular, we still do not know how different institutional arrangements, administrative traditions, and cultural factors play out in the implementation of co-production activities (McMullin, 2019, 2021a, b). For example, from a comparative perspective, in what country context or institutional arrangements is co-production more likely to take place? To what extent can the concept of co-production, which has been theoretically developed in a few OECD member countries, be applied to public management practice in other countries? Are there any countries with more suitable conditions for co-production? With the goal of theory development, researchers need to increase the number of countries studied and conduct more theoretical and empirical research (Toshkov, 2016).

In fact, the skewed focus on specific regions, particularly the lack of studies on the Asia-Pacific region, is not unique to co-production research but is a broader issue in the

³ For example, when it comes to police services, crime prevention can be more effective when it involves not only the efforts of the regular service provider, the police, but also the contributions of citizens. These citizen inputs can include participating in neighborhood watch and patrol programs, alerting the police when they witness suspicious activities, investing in self-defense equipment, and engaging in community organizations focused on safety and security. By working together, the police and the community can create a more comprehensive and efficient approach to crime prevention (Ostrom, 1978).

public administration and management field.⁴ By conducting co-production studies using Japan as a case, researchers can contribute to the development and testing of co-production theories while addressing the need for context-specific research and the critiques of West-centric approaches (Beagles et al., 2019; Gulrajani & Moloney; 2012, Milward et al., 2016; O'Toole Jr & Meier, 2015; Roberts, 2018, 2021; Peci & Fornazin, 2017).

8.3 The Role of Local Neighborhood Associations in Supplementing Government Resources

Co-production has been understood as the devolution of service responsibility to neighborhood organizations, individual service consumers, and public/private partnerships, with citizens and public agencies jointly providing public services (Levine & Fisher, 1984). Examples include citizens carrying out garbage collection, parent participation in education, and voluntary organization of recreation programs using local government facilities. Along with the deprofessionalization of bureaucracies, which involves replacing professionals with non-specialists in formal government positions, utilizing volunteers, and employing part-time staff, the devolution of service responsibilities to citizen organizations and service users presents a promising approach to public service delivery in times of fiscal stress (Levine & Fisher, 1984).

In fact, although not widely recognized by researchers outside of those specializing in Japan, the devolution of service responsibilities to local citizen groups and service consumers, as well as the reliance on community groups' networks and human resources, has been a key characteristic of post-war Japanese bureaucracies (Muramatsu; 1997; Hidaka, 2015; Ohta, 2020). In the aftermath of World War II, the Japanese government faced severe resource constraints, including limited personnel and budgets. To achieve its post-war reconstruction and economic development goals, the government chose not to expand its own organizational size and agencies. Instead, it created networks, including private organizations, to mobilize resources from society as a whole to accomplish its policy objectives. Muramatsu characterized this distinctive feature of post-war Japanese administration as the “maximum mobilization system” (Muramatsu, 1997). For example, the central government delegated administrative tasks and activities to local governments and monitored their progress, enabling it to achieve its policy goals without increasing its own size. At the local level, local governments have maintained relationships with community organizations and effectively utilized their human resources, ideas, and assets to supplement scarce resources and carry out administrative activities (Hidaka, 2015; Ohta, 2020). Local neighborhood associations

⁴ See several recent scholarly efforts to build more global public administration and management knowledge by incorporating studies focusing on the Asia-Pacific region (Chen et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Lapuente & Suzuki, 2022; van Der Wal & Demircioglu, 2020; Van der Wal & Mussagulova, 2023).

(NHAs) have played a key role in complementing the lack of administrative resources of local governments.

8.4 Local Neighborhood Associations in Japan

There are differing views regarding the origins of NHAs, with some researchers tracing their roots back to the 7th century. However, many scholars argue that NHAs emerged during or after the Meiji era (1868-1912), which marked the beginning of Japan's modernization (Torigoe, 1994). NHAs in their current form developed during the 20th century (Pekkanen, 2006, 2009). Although there are several definitions of NHAs by Japanese scholars (Torigoe, 1994), recent NHA studies in English often rely on Pekkanen's (2009, 29) definition: “voluntary groups whose membership is drawn from a small, geographically delimited, and exclusive area (a neighborhood), and whose activities are multiple and are centered on that same area”.

NHAs are a ubiquitous form of civil society organization in Japan, far more prevalent than in other advanced industrialized democracies (Pekkanen, 2009). These associations are formed based on residential proximity, typically comprising 100 to 300 households. Members pay dues, elect leaders, and engage in various community activities together (Pekkanen, 2009). NHAs are called *jichikai*, *chonaikai*, *choukai*, *burakukai*, *kukai*, *ku*, and other names in Japanese, depending on the area. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2024a), there were 295,838 NHAs in Japan as of April 1, 2023, compared to 293,227 in August 1996 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 1997), indicating no major change in the total number of NHAs in recent years.⁵ Out of 1,741 municipalities in Japan, 85.0% (1,479 municipalities) reported having NHAs in their jurisdiction, confirming that NHAs are present in most municipalities.

The unit of membership in an NHA is the household, and each association is restricted to a specific geographic area, with only one NHA per area. To acquire legal status, all individuals with a domicile in the area must be eligible for membership, and a substantial number of them should be current members (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024a). Although nationwide data on household membership rates in NHAs is not available, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2024a) provides membership rates for 5,050 legally recognized NHAs. Among these, 45.9% (2,320 NHAs) have a 90-100% household membership rate, 31.0% (1,563 NHAs) have a 70-90% rate, 16.7% (843 NHAs) have a 50-70% rate, and 6.4% (324 NHAs) have less than 50% membership rate. As previously mentioned, NHAs are the most pervasive form of residents' association in Japan, present in most municipal areas and encompassing a considerable portion of households as members. In fact, the prevalence of NHAs throughout Japan and the long-standing relationships between municipalities and NHAs are considered comparative

⁵ These numbers are limited to those NHAs which have acquired legal status.

advantages that Japanese local governments have in practicing and promoting co-production at the local level (Dollery et al., 2020). These associations have been instrumental in providing and implementing a range of local public services, including fire protection, flood warnings, cultural festivals, and various community activities (Pekkanen, 2006, 2009).

NHAs have been described as “state-society straddler organizations” or “ambiguous organizations” (Pekkanen, 2009, 28). Some Japanese public administration experts view NHAs as quasi-public entities or quasi-municipalities rather than voluntary associations (Kanai, 2004; Nishio, 2000), while others consider them “embedded organizations” that engage in frequent, habitual interactions with the bureaucracy and participate in policy-making and implementation processes alongside bureaucrats (Haddad, 2006). Hidaka (2021) refers to NHAs as “informal players in the local governance system”, lacking a formal legal foundation. In contrast, some scholars regard NHAs as civil society organizations, emphasizing their voluntary and independent nature (Pekkanen, 2006, 2009).

Although not explicitly stated, co-production literature in English seems to assume co-production with purely independent resident associations and does not elaborate on co-production with associations of an ambiguous nature such as NHAs. Ostrom (1996, 1973) defines co-production as “the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not 'in' the same organization”. Therefore, the ambiguous nature of NHAs, whether they are considered public organizations or external entities, is a key issue when exploring their role in co-production.

Another characteristic of NHAs is their engagement in various service activities for the common benefit of local residents (Hidaka, 2021). Neighborhood associations are involved in activities that encompass various aspects of community life, including fire and crime prevention, education, welfare, sanitation, and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals (Torigoe, 1994). According to Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2024a), the top activities performed by legally recognized NHAs are: 1) environmental beautification and cleaning activities in the area (93.3%), 2) communication among residents (circular notices, newsletters, etc.) (92.5%), 3) maintenance and management of community facilities (85.8%), 4) disaster and fire prevention (48.5%), 5) traffic safety and crime prevention (37.4%), 6) cultural and recreational activities (31.5%), 7) other activities (28.4%), 8) sports and recreational activities (26.0%), 9) organizing events such as bon dance, festivals, elderly appreciation day, and adulthood celebration day (25.8%), 10) social welfare activities (mainly for the elderly) (22.0%), 11) maintenance, repair, and improvement of roads and street lights (20.9%), 12) social welfare activities (mainly for children) (19.8%), 13) requests and petitions to administrative agencies (16.0%), and 14) celebrations and condolences (10.2%).⁶

⁶ The percentages of NHAs show the proportion of approved NHAs that were granted legal status between the fiscal years 2018 and 2022.

NHAs work in close collaboration with local authorities, enabling them to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of government services while simultaneously reducing expenses (Pekkanen & Tsujinaka, 2008). In addition to their voluntary activities, NHAs have been extensively involved in local governments' administrative activities as informal actors. For instance, they have been responsible for disseminating administrative information to local residents, acting as intermediaries between residents and local governments by conveying residents' requests to the authorities, and supplementing or carrying out administrative services on behalf of the government. This system, in which local governments entrust NHAs with the execution of various administrative tasks, is referred to by Japanese scholars as the “administrative cooperation system” (*gyōsei kyōryoku seido*) (Hidaka, 2015; Mori, 2008). In fact, while some activities of NHAs are purely resident-led independent activities, a significant portion of their activities involves supporting, supplementing, and acting as an extension of municipal administrative functions (Hidaka, 2015).

Many local governments engage in various administrative cooperation tasks with NHAs. According to Hidaka (2022), which collects survey data from 730 city-level municipalities in 2020, 86.6% of the responding local governments work with NHAs on irregular and emergency information distribution, circulation, and posting of notices. Collection of donations and fundraising is carried out by 85.4% of the surveyed local governments in collaboration with NHAs. Additionally, 83.5% of the local governments involve NHAs in the recommendation and selection of community committee members and in channeling local needs to the local government. Road beautification and environmental maintenance are undertaken by 80.8% of the surveyed local governments in partnership with NHAs. Furthermore, 79.9% of the local governments distribute, circulate, and post regular government bulletins through NHAs, while 79.5% manage crime prevention lights, curved mirrors, and community centers with the help of NHAs. Lastly, 75.3% of the surveyed local governments conduct disaster prevention drills and implement measures for vulnerable people during disasters in cooperation with NHAs.

Several studies have documented co-production activities between local governments and NHAs. For instance, Suzuki et al. (2021) shows how a local government collaborates with NHAs to tackle the issue of social isolation among elderly citizens in the Adachi ward. The Adachi ward encourages neighborhood associations to engage in activities that support and monitor senior citizens who may be at risk of isolation. These associations carry out various initiatives to connect with and assist the elderly population in their communities. Kinoshita et al. (2020) documents the synergistic relationships between local government and local community groups fostered by these co-production programs and the significant roles that NHAs play in creating operational manuals for evacuation centers in Sendai city. Although the term “co-production” is not explicitly used, Van Houwelingen (2012) describes how NHAs' activities contribute to enhancing social capital at the community level.

Population declines and government service cuts, especially in rural areas of Japan, have become critical issues. Suzuki (2017) empirically analyzes how local government spending cuts are associated with co-production activities primarily by NHAs, complementing declining administrative resources. Recently, the Japanese government, especially the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, has been promoting the establishment and activities of regional management organizations (RMOs) to solve local issues and supplement public service provisions at the local level (Jentzsch, 2024). RMOs are resident organizations that operate in a wider area than NHAs and include more local groups such as NPOs and private companies as members in addition to NHAs. For example, RMOs are engaged in various activities for the benefit of local residents, such as maintenance of public facilities, operation of community buses, snow shoveling and snow removal, interaction with the elderly, and childcare support (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2024b). Although like NHAs, RMOs are considered straddler organizations (Jentzsch, 2024), they perform a number of significant activities in the context of co-production.

8.5 Conclusions

This chapter has provided a concise overview of the origin and evolution of the co-production concept, as well as the key features of Neighborhood Associations (NHAs) and their co-production activities in Japan, addressing the first research question: What are NHAs from a citizen co-production perspective? The idea of co-production primarily emerged and evolved as an alternative approach to service delivery for U.S. municipalities confronting financial hardship. Interestingly, Japanese local governments, which have consistently faced constraints in human and financial resources, have historically utilized and mobilized the resources of community-based organizations, particularly NHAs, to provide public goods and services in a similar manner. Despite this established practice of co-production, Japanese local governments' co-production efforts with NHAs have been understudied in the research on co-production, particularly in terms of testing and developing existing theories.

Another significant point is to examine how accumulated co-production research in the Japanese language makes theoretical and empirical contributions to the broader field of co-production research, addressing the second research question. As discussed earlier, existing ideas and theories of co-production have made limited efforts to examine co-production practices outside North America and particular European countries, with little focus on comparative research. For example, how does co-production practice in Japan differ from that in other countries? From a comparative perspective, does Japan have advantages in co-production due to the existence of NHAs? Is co-production with ambiguous organizations such as NHAs unique to Japan? What insights can we gain from Japan's experience? Can findings from Japanese research fill the gaps in English-language research on co-production?

Systematic reviews of Japanese-language research on co-production, as seen in Cho et al. (2020) for Korean language studies on participatory budgeting, should serve as a bridge between academic discussions in the international community and those in the Japanese community, leading to a greater contribution to the development of global knowledge on co-production.

Finally, to answer the third research question, the chapter concludes by proposing several significant potential research questions for future study. One such question involves examining the impacts of co-production with NHAs on public service quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and citizen-government relationships. As explained earlier, despite the large volume of theoretical studies on co-production, empirical work aimed at analyzing the effects of co-production remains limited (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2021; Brix et al., 2020). For example, to what extent does co-production with NHAs help municipalities improve their fiscal efficiency and the quality of public services? To what extent does the presence of NHAs increase residents' trust in their local government? How much do residents' satisfaction with and trust in government services differ between municipalities or areas where NHAs are active and those where they are not? These questions highlight promising directions for future research, given the limited empirical work on this topic.

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Kohei Suzuki is assistant professor in the Institute of Public Administration, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He obtained his PhD from the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. He also holds the title of docent (Associate Professor) in Political Science at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He studies bureaucracy from a comparative perspective with a focus on bureaucratic structure, personnel policy, and gender representation. His work has been published in *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Governance*, *Public Management Review*, and several other peer-reviewed academic journals.