

Collective action and co-production of public services as alternative politics: The case of public transportation in Israel

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Abstract

Can dissatisfaction with existing policies lead to the co-production of public goods and services? If so, under what conditions could such dissatisfaction lead to the co-production of public goods and services? We posit that when (1) citizens are dissatisfied with the policy as designed, (2) third-sector organisations are formed, and (3) politicians and street-level managers are engaged, the co-production of public goods and services will take place. Analysing the Israeli religion-based restrictions on public transportation on the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday), this study argues that the intentional lack of public transport on Saturdays is overall met with discontent within the population and, in turn, leads third-sector organisations and local authorities to combine forces to find solutions on the local level. We have employed various mixed methods tools (e.g. a public opinion survey, existing statistics, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis) in order to test the Israeli case as an illustrative, crucial case study.

KEYWORDS

citizen's dissatisfaction, collective action, co-production, Israel, public transportation, religion

Points for practitioners

- Limited public services impose burdens on disadvantaged groups, who are often those with fewer resources, causing societal dissatisfaction with policy and its implementation.
- Co-production is facilitated when dissatisfied citizens encourage third-sector organisations, politicians, and street-level managers to engage.
- Local co-production efforts are expected to cease when governments decide to supply the lacking services.

1 | INTRODUCTION

At times, citizens are dissatisfied with public policies, particularly when it leads to the lack of a service they want (Dowding & John, 2011; Ingram & Schneider, 1993). Political and administrative actors may have ideological and interest-based motives for designing policies that have negative effects for users. The effects, however, impose extra burdens on users implying learning, psychological, and compliance costs (Moynihan et al., 2015). This is done either indirectly through elections or more directly when citizens try to influence control or regulate public services. Specifically, regarding essential public services, citizens may find different measures to overcome their dissatisfaction. If they have the desire and resources available, they ultimately ‘voice’ their concerns (Hirschman, 1970, 1993), trying to improve existing services.

In the case analysed in this article, voicing concerns the lack of public transportation on Saturdays in Israel because of the Jewish Sabbath (holy day of Saturday) has proven to be difficult over the years. One can say that this is a designed policy based on religion, with negative effects for citizens needing transportation on Saturdays. This is what Herd and Moynihan (2019) labels ‘politics by other means’, meaning seemingly good intentions for designing or enacting services in certain ways have negative consequences for certain groups, often those with fewer resources. Moynihan et al. (2015) label these as administrative burdens, specifically service burdens where users face certain costs, in our case trying to compensate for the lack of public transportation on Saturdays.

An alternative for dissatisfied users of public services is to choose to ‘exit’ (Hirschman, 1970, 1993). It is a difficult option because it demands a lot of resources and potentially meets many obstacles. It also deals with the potential for collective action (Pestoff, 2014). Lehman-Wilzig (1991) offers a strategy between ‘exit’ and ‘voice’ which he terms *alternative politics* (or quasi-exit). It includes bypassing the traditional system of governmental services and establishing alternative social and economic networks to offer what the official political system cannot provide (see in Levy & Mizrahi, 2008; Mizrahi et al., 2014). *Alternative politics* draws on specific strategies adopted by individuals and groups in response to lack of or declining availability of government services (Ben-Porat & Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Filc, 2017; Levy & Mizrahi, 2008; Mizrahi,

2012). Alternatives could either be the result of forming networks merely for narrow purposes, or piggyback on established third-sector groups that are developing alternative services (Pestoff, 2012).

A third alternative for service users is co-production. Co-production refers to the collaboration and contribution of resources from service users and providers, which raises the quantity and/or quality of a service, even in some cases ensuring that the service is conclusively provided (Bovaird et al., 2015; Ostrom, 1996; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1977). Co-production may be regarded as a bottom-up process, relying on collective actions and the active participation of either individuals or groups in the delivery of public services (Fotaki, 2011; Pestoff, 2012, 2014). It may also be regarded as a top-down process, initiated and controlled by the government (Joshi & Moore, 2004). Furthermore, there could be hybrid forms of co-production. In a comparative study of co-production and roles of third sector organisations, McMullin (2021) focuses on three forms of co-production whilst reflecting on the Neo-Weberian state, the New Public Management, and the New Public Governance. McMullin concluded that a plethora of variation exists between and inside each model while challenging the often-accepted thesis that co-production is compatible with New Public Governance.

Co-production is evident in areas including welfare and social services (Pestoff, 2006, 2009), health care (Dunston et al., 2009; Palumbo, 2016), income tax returns (Pestoff, 2012), childcare services (Pestoff, 2006), education (Davis & Ostrom, 1991; Porter, 2013), urban poverty (Mitlin, 2008), public information services (Chatfield et al., 2013), public transport (Gebauer et al., 2010), art (Kershaw et al., 2018), and more. It exists in Western democracies (Bovaird et al., 2016; Davis & Ostrom, 1991; Parrado et al., 2013; Pestoff, 2006, 2009) and in underdeveloped countries (Joshi & Moore, 2004).

In their review, Verschuere et al. (2012) focused on the main motivations of co-production. Building upon Alford (2009), they highlight two motivations. The first is self-interest, meaning that people co-produce goods and services because they have a personal interest in doing so. The second motivation refers to social values (Alford, 2009; Pestoff, 2012), meaning that co-production is a matter of increasing the nonmaterial value that clients receive from the services. Examples include non-intrinsic rewards and group solidarity. According to Pestoff (2012) and Alford (2009), additional intrinsic motivations needed to co-produce are the importance of the service provided (Pestoff, 2012), the desire to realise one's ethical values (Alford, 2009), and the desire to reduce the risk of receiving poor service (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016, 2021). Others refer to opportunism as a motivation (Ertimur & Venkatesh, 2010).

When addressing the long-term motivations for the institutionalised co-production of goods and services, Joshi and Moore (2004) suggested two different sets of motivating forces: a decline in the local or national government's ability to provide certain services, and the inability of state agencies to deliver services effectively because of external environmental elements. In a more normative view, Ryan (2012) states that co-production should be motivated by civic obligation not just volition, curiosity, or savings, which relates to a desire for collective action, for example through third-sector groups. From the governments side of co-production, one can focus either on political interests, meaning politicians seeking re-election, or public street-level managers driven by collective motivations and desire to facilitate public services (Herd & Moynihan, 2019).

Based on this theoretical framework, this study investigates, can dissatisfaction with existing policies lead to the co-production of public goods and services? If so, under what conditions could such dissatisfaction lead to the co-production of public goods and services? We posit that when (1) citizens are dissatisfied with the policy as designed, (2) third-sector organisations are formed,

and (3) politicians and street-level managers are engaged, the co-production of public goods and services will take place.

Specifically, using Israel's lack of transportation services on Saturdays due to religious restrictions as an illustrative case study, we wish to investigate: (1) Were people dissatisfied with the lack of public transport on Saturdays in Israel, and is it a potential motive behind the collective action of alternative transport by third-sector groups? (2) What are the alternative forms of public transportation on Saturdays organised by third-sector groups? (3) Did the third-sector transport initiatives lead to the co-production with the government? (4) What characterises this co-production?

The main thesis explored here maintains that: (1) the citizen's dissatisfaction with the transport policy as designed, (2) leads to that committed third-sector organisations are formed to improve the transport services, and (3) that politicians and street-level managers are engaged, which leads to co-production of public transport.

The study's contribution lays in suggesting an accumulative motivation to co-produce, where all conditions are necessary (i.e. a sole condition cannot be sufficient on its own merit). Further, it highlights that the source of citizen's dissatisfaction (condition 1) is administrative burdens caused by the policy as designed. It also shows that the co-production process is initiated by ideology-driven third-sector organisations operating as high-tech enterprises urging local politicians to use their expertise as service suppliers for their political gains.

The study further exemplifies that co-production might provide remedies for societal dissatisfaction in societies that suffer from cleavages that limit the options for policymaking in various fields. This is due to mixed interests of many social and ethnic groups and religious as well as national parties. It may also be illustrative and comparable with similar problems evident in other nations and societies, especially those who suffer similar or close cleavages. Finally, for the realm of public administration, the study treats religion as a paradigmatic case study, a service as any other, meaning generalisation can be made to other public services/products.

Following, a literature review on citizen's dissatisfaction as motivation for third-sector groups collective actions and co-production is outlined. The context is further discussed and followed by the layout of the methodology, main results, discussion, and conclusion.

2 | DISSATISFACTION LEADING TO THIRD SECTOR-BASED INITIATIVES

Dissatisfaction with lack of services, in our case transport services on Saturdays, may lead to third sector-based initiatives to create services outside the public apparatus. Dissatisfaction might become highly relevant when translated into behaviour. Dissatisfaction with public sector productivity means that government organisations routinely fail users of public services by offering inefficiently managed and substandard services (Kelly, 2007; Lyons, 2020). Citizens reacting to defects in service delivery through political action may behave in several ways: asking politicians to intervene, voting for political leaders who promise to make public services more efficient, or they can choose to stay away (i.e. exit; see in Hirschman, 1970, 1993), meaning creating their own alternatives (Van de Walle, 2018).

The third sector constitutes socio-economic initiatives which belong neither to the traditional private for-profit sector or the public sector. These initiatives generally derive their impetus from voluntary organisations, and often operate under a wide variety of legal structures (Defourny, 2014). Steven Ott argues that the non-profit sector is 'filling voids left by government agencies

that cannot or will not adequately serve citizens in need' (Ott, 2001, p. 2). Burton A. Weisbrod's theory on the voluntary non-profit sector as provider of public goods (Weisbrod, 1975) suggests that market failure occurs due to non-optimal provision of public goods. Some goods are undersupplied and others are oversupplied, leaving citizens unsatisfied (see in Ilhan, 2013). Consequently, third-sector organisations exert lobbying functions and channel interests towards the respective points of decision-making. Furthermore, they act as organisations which shape public discourses by financing alternative expertise or by campaigning (Evers, 1995). This can be described as a mode of satisfying needs (Moulaert & Ailenei, 2005).

Third sector alternatives, such as co-operatives and other non-profit organisations, can contribute to these goals, by giving clients and/or consumers greater influence in the production of social services and by providing them with a plurality of alternatives from which to choose (Pestoff, 1992), enhancing client satisfaction with public service (Lindenmeier et al., 2021).

3 | GOVERNMENT AND THIRD-SECTOR CO-PRODUCTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Co-production offers the potential for a very different way of building democratic action—from the bottom-up (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016, 2021). This is true for individual citizens as well as collective entities like third-sector groups (Bovaird, 2007; Pestoff, 2012, 2014; see also Verschuere et al., 2012). The latter may refer to groups such as voluntary associations (e.g. Ewert & Evers, 2012; Ostrom, 1993; see in Alford, 2014). Pestoff (2014) pointed out the potential contribution of the third sector to the sustainability of citizens' participation in the provision of public services.

Past research has demonstrated that relationships between the government and the third sector may benefit both sides (Pestoff & Brandsen, 2009; Salamon, 1995; Salamon & Toepler, 2015), as they have a genuine need to work together (Mitlin, 2008). Many third-sector organisations deliver public services with a relational and/or professional character (Brandsen & van Hout, 2006). Such organisations are also referred to as 'group co-producers,' meaning the voluntary, active participation by several citizens in groups (see in Bovaird et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the co-production between the government and the third sector may also be referred to as institutionalised co-production. The term indicates the provision of public services through a regular long-term relationship between state agencies and organised groups of citizens, where both make substantial contributions of resources (Joshi & Moore, 2004; Mitlin, 2008; Ostrom, 1996). Effective institutionalised co-production includes developing the proper organisational structures that facilitate co-production (Alford, 2009; Verschuere et al., 2012). Finally, co-production could also be hierarchical, as often alluded to but downplayed in the New Public Governance literature on networks and co-production (Osborne et al., 2016). The services initiated by third-sector group may need resources from the government to be sustainable, which may imply that the government regulate, control, or provide the services, or learn from them so that they can be outcompeted (Poocharoen & Ting, 2015; Prentice, 2006).

4 | POLITICIANS, STREET-LEVEL MANAGERS, AND CO-PRODUCTION

Politicians and street-level managers are two crucial elements in co-production as it is often assumed that they can make or break a co-production project. Politicians set the policy agenda

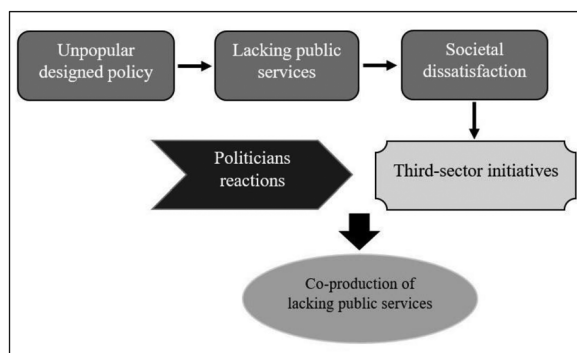


FIGURE 1 Model of the co-production of public services.

(Cohen, 2016; Keiser & Soss, 1998; Langbein, 2000) and managers direct its implementation (Vanleene et al., 2020).

Politicians are generally concerned with pleasing the electorate that can get them re-elected (Anzia & Moe, 2015). They may support a policy because they are taking a position, claiming credit for it or genuinely concerned about its success (Mayhew, 1974). This is especially true with policies that are complex with feedback difficult to anticipate (Oberlander & Weaver, 2015; Pierson, 2011). A variety of studies indicate that politicians influence policy outputs and outcomes at the local organisational level (May & Winter, 2009; Meier et al., 2004), shaping street-level bureaucratic political environment (Keiser & Soss, 1998; Lowry, 1992).

Within co-production, the staff on the frontlines of public services has a distinct expertise because of regular interaction with service users (Needham, 2008). They support, encourage, and coordinate the resources and capabilities of service users (Ryan, 2012). The main element for guaranteeing capacity building and the sustainability of co-production is the ability of public managers to manage co-productive fatigue, nurture behaviours, and facilitate their continuation even when public funding ceases (Brandsen & van Hout, 2006). Their street-level position allows them to identify possible partners in the co-production of services (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2008), on whom they report to their politically appointed superiors (Hupe & Hill, 2007). Therefore, they influence the selection of the civic partners who can make the co-production a success. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model of the co-production of public services as suggested here.

We investigate some of these ideas by examining the third-sector initiatives and co-productive efforts to provide public transportation on the Sabbath in Israel.

5 | THE CONTEXT—THE CASE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ON SATURDAYS IN ISRAEL

Israel was established on 15 May 1948 and is constitutionally defined as a Jewish and democratic state. This unique official character between religion and state creates a delicate consociational-driven balance between religious and secular concerns (Don-Yehiya, 1999; Golan-Nadir, 2022; Rubin, 2020). This balance is evident regarding four policy principles, one of which has a strong impact on public transportation services: the observance of the Sabbath (Saturday) (Rubinstein, 1967). State institutions that provide public transportation must abide by these regulations as defined by Orthodox Judaism, and thus prevent public transport services on Saturdays. In fact, they are considered as faith-based institutions that design and implement public policy (Hula

et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the policy states that people are individually free to choose how to observe these rules (Yanai, 1996), and generally may use their private vehicles or self-initiated transport alternatives.

To reinforce these regulations, a traffic ordinance forbidding public transportation on the Sabbath was passed only in 1991. Notwithstanding, the National Legislative Database indicates that since 1984 each session of Israel's parliament, the Knesset, has included three to five bills asking for the provision of public transportation on the Sabbath. All of them have failed, including the latest bill in 2020 by a vote of 26 for and 52 against (The 43rd meeting of the 23rd Knesset, 17 June 2020; Israeli National Legislative Database, 2020).

Bus services are the main form of public transportation in Israel, accounting for 75% of all passenger trips (Ida et al., 2018). For religious reasons, the service is unavailable for more than 24 h between late Friday afternoon and Saturday, causing a significant gap between religiously oriented policy as designed and the public will. Consequently, in the past 6 years, co-productive public transportation initiatives were established by several municipalities in cooperation with earlier societal-based programs to promote public transport on the Sabbath (*Hiddush*, 7 November 2019).

Overall, the Israeli public is dissatisfied with the performance of the public sector in general, a phenomenon that increases throughout the years. The latest 2018 report on the performance of the public sector in Israel shows that the public continues to express moderate or low satisfaction with public services provided by the state and its subagencies. Compared to past years, it seems that not only trust in public institutions is decreasing (e.g. the police, Israel Railways, Buses), but the public also feels less politically involved than in previous years and sees public administration as flawed (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in the case of public transportation on the weekend, the point of departure is that citizens are dissatisfied with the religious policy as designed, which hence causes a lack in public services. It is not the implementation/performance that causes Israelis dissatisfaction since the service simply does not exist—it is a mere lacuna in services due to official policy.

6 | METHODOLOGY

Applying a single-case study approach (Franklin et al., 2014), the Israeli case study presented here examines the two existing transport initiatives in the country (i.e. the population of the study), and can be defined as an illustrative, atypical case study (i.e. an ideal type). It aims to demonstrate the empirical relevance of a theoretical proposition by identifying at least one relevant case (Eckstein, 1975, p. 109, see in Levy, 2008). The Israeli case presenting public transport on Sabbath is an atypical one, where religion plays an important role. It may also be considered a crucial case study that can be useful for the purposes of testing certain theoretical arguments, if the theory provides relatively precise predictions (Eckstein, 1975, pp. 113–123).

To test our theoretical propositions, we have mixed both quantitative and qualitative data sources that hold several purposes. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), the best way to describe this mixed method research is the 'convergent design'. In this approach, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed during the same phase of the research process. The two sets of results are then merged into an overall interpretation in order to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic.

Practically, for the measurement of the independent variable, *dissatisfaction with existing policies*, we have used (1) documentation that intends to reflect on existing policy, (2) existing

statistics that introduces public opinion over time, and (3) a public opinion survey that aims to highlight current public opinion on existing policy. For the measurement of the dependent variable, *co-production of public goods and services*, we have used (1) in-depth interviews which aim to illustrate the collective action resulting in the co-production of transportation on Sabbath with local government. Such varied measurement allows high levels of validity and reliability (Harrison, 2013).

Data collection tools and analysis includes:

Textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. Our primary source material includes legislation from official state institutions and the Israeli Ministry of Transport. We also used secondary source materials such as reports issued by research centres and newspaper articles.

In-depth interviews. To obtain a more detailed understanding of the co-production process, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews between 2015 and 2020. The interviews target several samples of participants that can shed light on the described phenomenon from different perspectives: (a) the third sector—founders of third-sector organisations; (b) local government—municipal street-level managers and politicians; and (c) professional experts—lawyers, mainstream newspaper reporters, and academicians who specialise in the relationship between religion, state, and public transportation issues. The interviewees were sampled through snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014) while assigning a defined quota to each group of interviewees. The interviewees were asked to reflect on the co-production process and its legality and ability to sustain. Those involved in the process of co-production were asked to describe their motivations for participating in the co-production of public transportation on the Sabbath. Mostly, we were interested in their perceptions on long-term co-productive services as a method for overcoming the difficulties citizens encounter in policies, and their effect, if any, on it.

Existing statistics. We have used official government statistics and existing public opinion surveys in order to highlight general trends describing reality at different points in time (Harrison, 2013; Howard, 2021). The official statistics mainly provide basic socio-demographic data (on levels of religiosity among Israeli Jews) (Allin, 2021), and existing statistics sheds light on public opinion throughout the decades (Harrison, 2013).

A public opinion survey. We have conducted an online survey initiated by the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University and fielded by *iPanel*, an Israeli survey company,¹ on 9 January 2022. We used a cluster sampling of 4533 adult Israeli Jews. Overall, the sample size for this probability-based representative sample² survey is 507 Israeli Jews: 51.4% women and 48.6% men. The average age is 42 (standard deviation = 16.1). Subsequently, since our survey sample included only 2.9% ultra-Orthodox Jews, instead of 10% as in the general population (due to difficulties recruiting participants), we corrected the under representation of this segment of the population using a weighting technique.

The survey included two close-ended questions, namely: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (a), Public transportation should be introduced on Shabbat throughout the country, except in areas where there is a religious or ultra-Orthodox majority., (b), In Israel, civil society organisations (Noa Tanoa, Shabos) and several local authorities have established a public–local transportation network on Saturdays to cater to citizens interested in this service on the weekends. This public service, which is not funded by the state, is sufficient to satisfy many groups in the population that needs public transportation on Shabbat (e.g. the elderly, people of low socio-economic status, soldiers, young people without a license)., The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a scale ranging from (1) *agree completely*, *mostly agree*, *mostly disagree*, and *disagree completely* to (5) *do not know*.

We used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the results (Creswell, 2014). The data were analysed using SPSS software version 25. Descriptive statistics were performed using means and standard deviations for the continuous variables, and frequencies for the discrete variables. Univariate correlations were performed using the chi-square test. Specifically, the two main questions on transport policy were correlated with religiosity, education level, age group, and gender, yet religiosity made the only meaningful correlation. Significance was considered for p -values lower than 5%.

7 | FINDINGS

7.1 | Citizens' dissatisfaction with the policy as designed

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 74% of Israelis identify as Jews (CBS report on Israel in figures, 2021), of whom 44.8% are non-religious or secular, 33% are traditional,³ 11.7% are religious, and 10% are ultra-Orthodox (CBS Report on Religion and Self-definition, 2020). The original relationship devised between the state and religious regulations has been described as a status quo, what one law expert called 'the Israeli Magna Carta' (Interviewee 9). This desire to maintain the status quo is often invoked when religious politicians do not want existing policies to change (Interviewees 16–17), despite a secular majority in the state. An example of this debate is the statement by an official in the Ministry of Religious Services, that lack of public transportation on the Sabbath has become a symbol of the Jewishness of the state (Interviewee 18) versus what a Member of the Knesset described as 'an impossible situation where the state does not supply a basic service' (Interviewee 16). Overall, our interviewees acknowledged that religious constraints deprive citizens of basic services (Interviewees 2–4, 7–10, 13, 15–17). They noted that this agreement must be considered, particularly because the socio-demographic reality has changed since the establishment of the state (Interviewees 7–8).

Overall, as interviews indicate, religious state policies direct the lack of transportation on weekends that have a rather substantial effect on citizens' lives, in this case lack of options. Besides taking a taxi (not defined as a public transport), which is costly, there is no other public way to commute on weekends. Consequently, some citizens face this deficiency in services more excessively. Some vulnerable members of society (e.g. people of low socio-economic status, people with physical disabilities, soldiers, residents of periphery areas, youth without a driving license, the elderly and more) have great disadvantages with the lack of public transport and cannot commute on weekends (Interviewees 2–5, 7–10, 13, 15–18).

Existing public opinion surveys indicate that the Israeli Jewish public has generally expressed dissatisfaction with the existing public transportation policy on the Sabbath over a long period of time. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, surveys gathered by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute that asked, *To what degree do you accept the statement that Israel needs to provide public transportation services on Saturdays, except for in highly religious areas?* indicate substantial support: 50% (1986), 48% (1987), 63% (1991), 69% (2000), 59% (2009), 71% (2018), 60% (2019), and 64% (2021) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Similarly, a 2021 survey by the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University shows that 66.57% strongly agreed or agreed that Israel needs to provide public transportation services on Saturdays.

In the 2022 survey, conducted by the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University for this study, 43.4% said they completely agreed and 19.6% mostly agreed that Israel needs

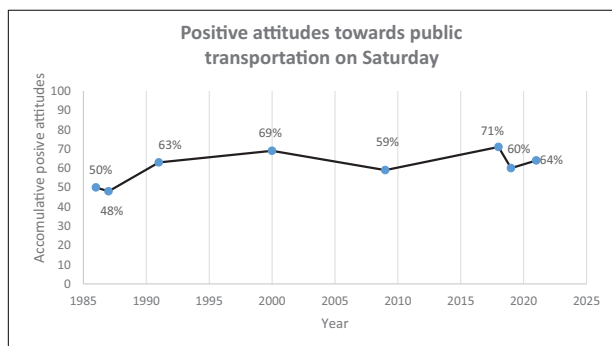


FIGURE 2 Positive responses to the need for public transportation on the Sabbath. See at <https://en.idi.org.il/galleries/20650>. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

to provide public transportation services on Saturdays, except for in highly religious areas. This 63% agreement contrasts with the 35.5% who mostly disagreed or disagreed completely. When divided into levels of religiosity, it is evident that the secular segment of population, naturally, supports this option more than other more religious segments; secular (88.6%), traditional (61.9%), religious (20%), and ultra-Orthodox (0%) completely or mostly agreed. Further, 54% mostly agreed or agreed completely that the state should be in charge on initiating public transportation services on Saturday.

Given this strong and ongoing concern about the lack of public transportation, third-sector organisations and municipalities began co-productive efforts to provide a solution (Interviewee 14).

7.2 | Third-sector organisational initiatives

In the past 6 years, two substantial civic initiatives have established local public transportation services in 15–20 cities in Israel: *Shabus* in the Jerusalem area, and *Noa Tanoa* in the central cities around Tel Aviv. The first, *Shabus* (a play on the words Sabbath and bus), is a non-profit cooperative transportation association in Jerusalem that was established in 2015. It offers transportation to Jerusalem residents who want to travel on Saturdays (*Shabus* website, 2020; *Jerusalem Post*, 2 May 2015). Its founders tried to find a compromise between the Transportation Ministry's refusal to give licenses to operate public transportation on the Sabbath and the needs of many city residents for services (*Ynet News*, 5 January 2015). As the association's co-founder noted, 'Before Shabu's establishment I reviewed public opinion surveys and asked people on the city streets if they needed it' (Interviewee 12).

The second, *Noa Tanoa* (meaning 'you'll really move'), is a non-profit cooperative transportation association that operates in central areas of Israel. Bus travel is open to members of the association who register on the association's website (*Noa Tanoa* website 2020; *Ynet News*, 29 September 2019). As *Noa Tanoa*'s founder explained, 'We have discovered a wide-open space in the realm of public transport. We offer a service that was non-existent for the well-being of citizens' (Interviewee 10).

Evidently, the establishment of these third-sector organisation initiatives in the realm of public transportation is the first time in which such a large-scale initiative has ever taken place. This might have several reasons. First, the issue of preserving the Sabbath in the public realm is highly salient and publicly debatable—it is thus not challenged often. Moreover, the infrastructure and professional information one needs to possess in order to initiate a sustainable transport service

are significant. Finally, with the advance of alternatives in an additional debated religious policy, namely marriage, by third-sector organisations (see in Golan-Nadir, 2022), Shabus and Noa Tanoa's founders have found the time to be ripe for action. The establisher's realisation that this is the right time for action was even more notable due to existing statistical data on societal dissatisfaction with the lack of weekend transport decades back, and further reassured with public opinion surveys they have conducted themselves (Interviewees 10, 12).

Motivations for doing so include helping disadvantaged populations, people of low socioeconomic status, young people, senior citizens, and people with physical disabilities (Interviewees 1, 5–6, 12, 14–16). As the secular association activists indicated, Israeli civil society has sought to provide public transportation services on the weekends (Interviewees 1, 15). Recent civil initiatives in this regard are said to be of great value. Their actions provide a needed service and serve as a protest towards existing policy (Interviewees 14, 16). As the founders of the association supplying the service argued, 'Our goal is to show people that change is possible' (Interviewee 10), noting that they wanted 'to influence national-level policy' (Interviewee 12). Ultimately, led by ideology, they hope to cease to exist because the state will provide the service (Interviewees 10, 12; *The Times of Israel*, 1 May 2015).

7.3 | Co-production of the new transport services

As the data has shown, the co-production enterprise emerged from below; it was initiated by third-sector organizations that introduced it to the population. When they needed further financial resources in order to sustain their initiative, local politicians, who were in search of political gains, cooperated with them. This section addresses this development.

7.3.1 | Third-sector organisations reaching out to municipalities

After succeeding in providing these services locally, these civic associations wanted to expand by cooperating with local city council members to promote public transport on the Sabbath (Interviewees 10, 12, 14–15). When the service gained popularity, municipalities joined the civil effort (Interviewees 10, 16–17). One of Shabu's co-founders stated, 'After 3 years of activity, we hoped to cooperate with the local authorities since they have the budgets to fund this ever-growing public service. We started sending municipalities a 'one pager' which illustrates our goals and suggested solutions' (Interviewee 12). In a similar fashion, Noa Tanoa's founder said, 'As a donation-based association, we have limited resources, so we decided to cooperate with municipalities. Over time, our association accumulated knowledge about public transport on the Sabbath. We wanted to use our knowledge and the cities' budgets to deliver a good service. Since 2018 we have been working with mayors, deputies, and CEOs—people the mayors' trust. We are paid for managing the service' (Interviewee 10).

Consequently, the two associations are competing on bids to become the operators of the municipalities' transportation (Interviewees 1–2, 10, 12–13, 15). Their responsibilities include renting the buses from companies, assigning a coordinator to each bus, and following the bus routes on GPS (Interviewees 10, 12–13, 15).

7.3.2 | Local politicians and street-level managers institutionalise the collective action

While third-sector organisations operate the services, municipalities fund them, making them a major factor in the provision of public transportation (Interviewees 1–2, 10, 12–13, 15–17, 19–20). Our interviewees acknowledged that pressure at the local level from the population makes the municipality more interested in offering the service. Consequently, the cities involved in co-production also considered the social zeitgeist prior to initiating the collaboration (Interviewees 1, 10–14, 17, 19–20). As a founder of a public transport association elaborated, ‘A while before the 2019 elections in local municipalities, candidates who searched for campaign goals surveyed their population’s preferences. They found that there is a great deal of demand for public transport on the Sabbath. Hence, municipalities turned to us since our association knows how to operate the service cheaper and more effectively than it could cost the municipality without one supportive all-embracing unit (e.g. short, and efficient inner-city lines, proper time schedule, effective advertisements)’ (Interviewee 10). Indeed, third-sector transport associations are constantly approached by municipalities to co-produce transport services (Interviewees 10–13, 15, 17, 19–20; *Walla News*, 17 August 2019). In fact, mayors are often asked to explain why they do not provide public transportation in cities (Interviewees 1, 15, 17, 19–20).

Consequently, to overcome the national restrictions on weekend public transportation, the local service is free of charge, as it is funded using local budgets (Interviewees 1, 10–13, 16, 19–20). To date, the national government has not involved itself in the service, and did not ban its supply as well (Interviewee 13).

8 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we have investigated, can dissatisfaction with existing policies lead to the co-production of public goods and services? If so, under what conditions could such dissatisfaction lead to the co-production of public goods and services? We posit that when (1) citizens are dissatisfied with the policy as designed, (2) third-sector organisations are formed, and (3) politicians and street-level managers are engaged, the co-production of public goods and services will take place.

The main argument in the study, as demonstrated by the Israeli case, is that the designed religious-based lack of public transportation on Saturdays is ultimately met with dissatisfaction within the population. This was an important and broad precondition for third-sector groups to initiate transport services, as *alternative politics* (Lehman-Wilzig, 1991) or here, alternative services. Further, a major motive behind these initiatives seems to have been concerns for users who are in need of such services (Pestoff, 2009). The third-sector groups’ initiatives to co-production with municipal governments were based on two main factors. First, these groups needed resources to make the service sustainable. Second, politicians/local municipal managers saw the provision of the lacking services as a tool to increase their popularity, therefore potentially strengthening their position and political power.

The point of departure for our case study is that by political–religious-based design that is consequent from the religious cleavage in the state, many Israelis are experiencing costs related to lack of public transport on Saturdays. Herd and Moynihan (2019, pp. 3–11) see such burdens as consequential, distributed, and constructed. First, burdens are consequential in the way that they

have rather substantial effects on peoples' lives, in our case lack of options. Second, the distributive aspect of burdens relates to 'who gets what' and primarily combines learning and compliance costs. Achieving public services takes a lot of effort and relates to social resources and investment of time, which often reveal Matthew effects (i.e. inequality where "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer") (Merton, 1968). People with few resources lack human capital like cognitive and non-cognitive skills, such as social capital, meaning those types of users/clients will have great disadvantages in achieving public services (Rigney, 2010). The constructed-related burdens are about the actions of political and administrative actors that may directly or indirectly impose burdens that imply learning, compliance, and psychological costs (Baekgaard et al., 2021). Empirically, our data illustrates a causal mechanism between peoples' dissatisfaction and third-sector initiatives for alternative services, as collective action (Bruch et al., 2010). Specifically, the interview data seems to indicate that these initiatives both culminated out of societal dissatisfaction and were motivated by helping disadvantaged groups. The latter have embraced such initiatives because of the particular burdens that they suffer from (cf. Verschuere et al., 2012).

This study outlines that the pooled collective action manifested in alternative transport service is a direct effect of lack of availability of governmental services (Cohen & Filc, 2017; Mizrahi, 2012). The service-providing actions taken by third-sector groups seem to be motivated by altruism and collective sentiments (Alford, 2009; Pestoff, 2012). This is shown also in its design where there is a sharing of burdens amongst members (Moynihan et al., 2015). Nonetheless, as interviews show, with the increase in service users, the societal initiative cannot sustain without material support. This support was found in local authorities in the process of co-production. The two contributors to the co-production hold different motivations; third-sector actors wish to sustain their altruistically oriented societal enterprise, and local politicians wish to add a local service that will enhance their popularity and get them re-elected.

For the third-sector actors, co-production seems to be motivated by a classical concern—the lack of resources and effort at making it sustainable; therefore, it is characterised by institutionalised co-production (Joshi & Moore, 2004; Mitlin, 2008). Nonetheless, through the institutionalised co-production, third-sector actors are facing three types of challenges regarding 'arena-shifting' (Flinders & Buller, 2006), all potentially undermining their initiatives. First, they must compete on a market to get the tender for municipalities, which implies a strain on their own resources and potentially a changing profile of the initiatives. Second, when they are in established co-production with the municipalities, they must adapt to public regulations, rules, and cultures. Third, when co-production is seen as potentially successful, they are more exposed to a political market, where co-production could be more characterised by ideology, conflicts, and political competitions (Etgar, 2008; Turnhout et al., 2020; Van de Walle, 2018).

Hence, the study's contribution lays in suggesting an accumulative motivation to co-produce, where all conditions are necessary (i.e. a sole condition cannot be sufficient on its own merit). Further, it highlights that the source of citizen's dissatisfaction (condition 1) is administrative burdens caused by the policy as designed. It also shows that the co-production process is initiated by ideology-driven third-sector organisations operating as innovative enterprises urging local politicians to use their expertise as service suppliers for their political gains.

The study further exemplifies that co-production might provide remedies for societal dissatisfaction in societies that suffer from cleavages that limit the options for policymaking in various fields. This is due to mixed interests of many social and ethnic groups and religious as well as national parties. It may also be illustrative and comparable with similar problems evident in other nations and societies, especially those who suffer similar or close cleavages.

9 | CONCLUSION

From a normative perspective, the co-production of public goods and services may be considered a positive phenomenon. It may encourage citizens' participation in the public realm (Pestoff, 2012, 2014) and increase third-sector groups involvement in public policy (Brandsen & van Hout, 2006; Pestoff, 2014), but also reflect the local government's accountability to the will of its people (Kluvers & Tippett, 2010). From a democratic perspective, such a phenomenon may be both positive and negative (Brix et al., 2020). The positive side is both related to participation and inclusion of people and their collective initiative (Dahl et al., 2003), not to mention if they participate in institutionalising the interests of disadvantaged groups. It could also be considered a threat to the democratic system's stability when conducted at the local level. The provision of intensive, large-scale services at the local level may increase the inequality between wealthy and poor local authorities, prevent the allocation of local budgets from other mandatory essential local services such as healthcare, education, and culture, and increase the popularity of local political actors, who co-produce the service to gain popularity and enhance their electoral support (Steen et al., 2018).

One of the limitations of our study is that the case presented here is specific in terms of time, place, and context. There are not many examples of such religious-based lack of services around the world; therefore, we do not claim identical initiatives and co-production will operate in all circumstances. Although other or additional elements may motivate the co-production of public services in other contexts, citizens' dissatisfaction with the policy as designed, service-oriented third-sector organisations, and engaged politicians and street-level managers are crucial conditions for the co-production of services and a preliminary framework for future research. While our hypotheses were validated using data from the relationship between religion and state, we maintain that they apply to other macro-level restrictions in areas such as economics, culture, or the environment. Hence, religion may be considered a paradigmatic case study—a barrier to the provision of public services just as any other barriers.

Future research in other countries and policy realms should focus on the more specific role played by citizens' dissatisfaction with existing policies as a factor leading to the creation of third-sector initiative and co-production of public services. Doing so would shed further light on the importance of this factor. Other research directions, such as focusing on other types of third-sector organisations and business enterprises, and on different types of public goods and services, will improve our understanding of this critical aspect. Also, since this study examined a democratic state, the theoretical framework offered here should be further expand to study non-democracies with their particular characteristics.

Finally, lack of national level services that are co-produced at the local level may reinforce societal discontent and increase the public pressure on the government to modify its policies. When a missing service becomes an existential necessity at the national level, it is likely that it will be produced. In the Israeli case, public transportation on the Sabbath is not just a religious issue but could also be defined as an important factor in times of climate crises, air pollution, and endless car accidents due to crowded roads. When the service becomes an existential necessity, the religion-based barrier might vanish.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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ENDNOTES

¹ <https://www.ipanel.co.il/en/>

² *iPanel* created representative quotas in accordance with the Israeli Bureau of Statistics' official data.

³ Traditional Jews do not necessarily avoid traveling on the Sabbath, marry religiously, or eat kosher food. It is a very individual, fluid definition.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

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Interviewee 2—Media reporter, 21 July 2019

Interviewee 3—Former Member of Knesset, 24 March 2016

Interviewee 4—Member of Knesset, 17 March 2016

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