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Taco Brandsen, Willem Trommel, and Bram Verschuere (eds.): Manufacturing Civil Society

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Taco Brandsen, Willem Trommel, and Bram Verschuere (eds.), *Manufacturing Civil Society: Principles, Practices and Effects*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014, pp. 240, index, \$105.00.

This edited volume seeks to untangle a complex paradox in modern governance—though government collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) has led to a decline of CSO legitimacy, collaboration with civil society is still a popular government solution for providing public services. Taco Brandsen, Willem Trommel, and Bram Verschuere, professors of public administration, policy, and management in the Netherlands and Belgium, offer a fascinating collection of empirical essays exploring how governments attempt to revitalize, reinvent, and manufacture civil society today.

In chapter one, the editors introduce the volume's theoretical framework, arguing that the dual trends of (1) pluralistic governance and CSO co-production and (2) the decline of traditional forms of civil society (eg. churches and community organizations) have enabled states to recreate civil society for their own social purposes. Chapters two and eleven explain this theory's two conceptual themes. In chapter two, Rik Peeters explores the first theme: that states today are actively involved in redefining institutional parameters of civil society. He argues that the state has constructed a discursive metaphor to justify intervention in society by defining proper citizen behavior—citizens either collaborate “with” the government or stand “against” it by displaying deviant behavior that requires correction. Hans Boutellier describes

the volume's second theme in chapter eleven: that this modern redefinition of civility is not one-sided. Instead, it can be understood as a citizen- and civil society-led movement of counterdemocracy with CSOs pursuing their own preferences.

The remaining chapters explore how government efforts at recreating civil society and CSO responses to these interventions create interesting social and market dynamics. In chapter three, Jenny Harlock shows how the conditions for CSO-provision of public services have changed in the wake of increased privatization, ultimately demonstrating that CSOs are not passive recipients of government attempts to redefine civility, but that they actively respond to the new environment and attempt to reshape it themselves. In chapter four, Rory Shand and Roger Higman show how the British government's Big Society agenda has increased the mission, platform, and resources available to environmental charities while simultaneously using privatization as a smokescreen for decreasing environmental spending.

In chapter five, Maikel Waardenburg and Hester van de Bovenkamp show how direct state intervention in civil society can promote government policy goals and ideologies, using Dutch sport associations and patient organizations as examples. Roxana Radu and Daniel Pop make a similar case in chapter six, arguing that an influx of money from the European Union allowed the governments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia to create a quasi-market of CSO-provided educational services, thus outsourcing the responsibility of providing public services and reshaping civil society with their own preferences.

In chapter seven, Annelie Beller and Rabea Hass analyze the National Voluntary Service, a new government program aimed at reshaping German civil society. After the end of compulsory military conscription, the state sought to inculcate social norms in citizens by encouraging voluntarism, but direct intervention led to inefficiency in the CSO sector. Similarly, in chapter eight Simona Franzoni shows that legislation requiring collaboration between the state and civil society in Italy has not worked well in practice, leaving both regional governments and CSOs frustrated. In chapter nine, Boris De Corte and Bram Verschuere quantify the effects of legislated co-production on Belgian CSOs, finding that organizations dependent on government resources have lower levels of autonomy and public legitimacy, leading to CSO mission drift and goal displacement. Finally, in chapter ten, Ora-Orn Poocharoen and Fazlin Abdullah show how Singapore has faced difficulty balancing the need to control and empower CSOs as it reshapes its nascent civil society sector.

One of the volume's key assumptions is that the contemporary relationship between the state and civil society is distinctive and unique to today—that governments today are powerful enough and civil society diffuse enough to form a new conception of civility. However, the case for this uniqueness needs to be made more forcefully. How did governments move from the welfare state, with privatized CSOs providing

public services, to the modern network state, with states attempting to define the nature of civil society co-production?

The selection of countries covered in this volume gives an in-depth look at the new state-civil society relationship primarily from a Western European perspective. Only chapter ten provides a non-European point of view (Singapore), and while the findings in the chapter are fascinating, I was not convinced that the lessons of civil society's position in a nondemocratic Asian country are necessarily comparable to the European experience. A clearer explanation of the volume's case selection would have been helpful to better situate the purpose of the individual chapters.

A major difficulty in compiling an edited volume is fitting each of the chapters into the overarching theoretical framework. While each of the contributions convincingly addresses the idea of government-led manufacture of civil society and the sector's response to their intervention, the link to the main theory is rarely made explicit. More clearly tying the findings of each chapter to the book's guiding theory, would make the volume feel more unified and less like a compilation of empirical articles.

In spite of these minor issues, *Manufacturing Civil Society* provides a fascinating and compelling view into an emerging mode of governance as both states and CSOs struggle to reshape civil society to their advantage. This book will interest CSO leaders and managers, politicians and bureaucrats who work with CSOs, and scholars of comparative public administration.