SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC POLICY

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Introduction

In this paper, we will be talking a great deal about the democratization of public policy in Canada. But we will be doing so with the intent of establishing bridges to the theme of democratization of public policy in Latin America. While our deliberations on public policy certainly build on the expertise we have developed concerning historical trends and recent reforms in social policy in Canada and Quebec, these deliberations are enriched by the fact that, for the past 15 years or so, to analyse the changes in the state and in public policy in our country more accurately, we have felt the need to monitor closely similar changes that are under way in a number of European and Latin American countries. In that context, we have made several study trips to Latin America and have been closely following developments in the Latin American literature on the democratization of the state and public policy, paying close attention to similarities and differences between societies of the North and those of the South. All this, while not making us a Latin American specialist, has nevertheless made us a specialist in public policy changes in the North who is interested in the North while being influenced by numerous discussions with stakeholders and researchers from the South who share similar research issues on the democratization of the state, the economy and society.[1]

In short, we will be reporting on some findings from our research on democratization of public policy. We will do so by referring to the findings of certain theoretical and empirical research on specific social policy reforms, paying particular attention to certain reforms in which co-operation is seen between the state and stakeholders in the social and solidarity economy. We will also do so by taking into account certain literature reviews concerning the participation of stakeholders from civil society, the market, the third sector and the social and solidarity economy in the democratization of the state and public policy. It must be understood here that in our research, a large part of the originality of our framework stems from the fact that we are seeking to make the link between various segments of scientific literature which often evolve hermetically. We are referring here to segments of literature concerning the reform of the state and public administration, civil society, the third sector and the social and solidarity economy. It seems to us that researchers and stakeholders specializing in the social economy, both in the North and in the South, would benefit from being more familiar with the expertise of researchers and actors specializing in the field of reform of the state and public policy and vice versa.[2]

The core of our thesis in the following pages will be to report on a number of our research findings, both theoretical and empirical, concerning the "democratizing" impact of the participation by the social economy in the application and definition of public policy. In that regard, we will be prompted to differentiate clearly between two concepts that are often treated as synonymous, that of the *co-construction* of public policy, and that of its *co-production*. For us, the difference between the two concepts is as follows: co-production refers to participation by stakeholders from civil society and the market in the implementation of public policy, while co-construction refers to participation by those very stakeholders in the design of public policy. Thus, co-construction stands upstream from the adoption of public policy, whereas co-production lies downstream, at the moment of its implementation.

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[1] The Latin American countries which we have had the opportunity to monitor more closely with respect to research in line with our centres of interest are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Mexico and Uruguay.

[2] For instance, in Latin America, when one examines the very rich literature on the democratization of the state and public policy as seen for instance in the CLAD journal *Reforma y Democracia* over the past 10 years or so, with a few exceptions (Elgue, 2004), one finds few references to the literature on the social and solidarity economy. On the other hand, among Latin American researchers recognized for their expertise in social and solidarity economy (Vuotto, 2003; Coraggio, 2004; Cattani, 2004; Coraggio and Gaiger, 2007; Singer, 2007; *La otra economia*, 2007), few references are made to the literature on the reform of the state and public administration. In Quebec, a reconciliation is currently being seen between researchers at ENAP (*École nationale d'administration publique*) and researchers specializing in social economy (Côté, Lévesque and Morneau, forthcoming in 2008).

To analyse the processes of co-construction and co-production of public policy, we use a conceptual framework responsive to the multiple configurations arising from the tangible evolution of interactions among three main spheres—the state, the market and civil society. By definition, public policy always involves participation by the state sphere and public authorities, since without state intervention there is no public policy. But the question to be considered is the following: Does state intervention in the genesis and application of public policy occur with or without participation by stakeholders from the market and civil society? Our answer to this question will be that the democratization and enhancement of public policy requires participation by collective and individual stakeholders from the market and civil society in its creation (co-construction) and its application (co-production). Clearly, to have good public policy, it is not enough merely to pay lip service to co-construction and co-production. Hence our concern to pinpoint the features and conditions of the configurations most compatible with the enhancement and democratization of public policy. Additionally, in these configurations, we will find participation by social economy stakeholders.

The paper comprises four main sections. In the first, we clarify some concepts, in particular public policy, civil society and social economy. In the second, we look at the co-production of public policy. In the third, we examine the co-construction of public policy, with a view to identifying the features of a configuration model that is more democratic and solidarity-based, imbued with the contribution from the social economy. Finally, in the fourth section, we use the findings of our research on tangible cases of social policy reform, particularly in the field of social housing, to show that the democratic, solidarity-based model of co-construction and co-production of public policy, far from being solely a conceptual model, is to be found in certain social policy reforms that have occurred in Quebec and Canada over the past 20 years.

I- Some Theoretical Clarifications

To grasp more clearly, in theoretical and practical terms, our analysis of the democratization of public policy while being attentive to the contribution from the social economy, it is important to agree on the meaning we give to certain key concepts used in our conceptual framework. Cases in point are the concepts of state, market, civil society, third sector, social economy, public policy and social and solidarity economy.

State, Market, Civil Society, Third Sector, Social Economy

In the introduction, we stated that we would be taking into account interaction among *the state, the market and civil society* so as to pinpoint the nature and scope of the phenomena of co-construction and co-production of public policy. We also mentioned participation by stakeholders from the market and civil society in the definition and implementation of public policy. We pointed out our interest in a theoretical perspective in which the state works as part of a team with a variety of stakeholders from the market and civil society. In so doing, we reaffirmed our attachment to a *tripolar approach* responsive to the evolution of shared responsibilities among individual and collective stakeholders associated with the state, the market and civil society (Olvera, 1999: 20; Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Lévesque, 2003; Vaillancourt and Laville, 1998; Vaillancourt et al, 2004; Favreau, 2006). Opting for a tripolar perspective means distancing oneself from the binary approaches prevalent in the literature, whether those that examine solely the interaction between the state and the market or those focussing exclusively on interaction between the state and civil society. In either case, there is a tunnel vision which impoverishes the analysis of problems and planning of solutions.

Concerning *the state*, note that the players associated with it may belong to a variety of political scenes (local, regional, national, continental or global). We make a distinction among the conventional branches

of political power, namely, the executive branch (or the elected members of the political party running the government), the legislative branch (or all elected members from the various political parties) and the judiciary. Obviously, we distinguish the *political level*, including those with a mandate under representative democracy, from the *administrative level*, comprising those involved in public administration.

In passing, we note that depending on the *political system* chosen by a country, the number of states may increase or decrease. In countries with a *unitary* system, including Chile, Uruguay, Haiti, France and England, there are fewer states and, in the formal sense, fewer arenas where public policy is defined. In countries with a *federal* system, such as Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Germany, there are more states. Thus in Canada, in addition to the federal state, there are 13 provincial and territorial states to which the Constitution gives significant powers to legislate on social policy. This explains why it is possible, in this paper, to distinguish the Quebec state from the Canadian state and to refer to specific Quebec social policy reforms in relation to those to be found in other provinces or throughout the federal state. According to some researchers, there is a connection to be made between the difficulties of decentralization and the fact that the Chilean political system is unitary (Garretón, 2007: 124 and 179; Waissbluth, Leyton and Inostroza, 2007).

As to *the market*, we see it as a sphere distinct from that of civil society. This clarification is an important one, since much of the literature on civil society remains confused in this regard. For us, the market refers to the individual and collective stakeholders in the labour market or the market economy (businesses, owners and executives, managers, employees and self-employed, unemployed, etc.). The market also refers to representation structures, including management and labour organizations.[3]

As to *civil society*, we recognize that it is not a uniform reality. In the tradition of CRISES and CIRIEC International (Lévesque, 2003; Lévesque and Thiry, forthcoming; Enjolras, 2006) and in company with a number of Latin American researchers (Dagnino, 2002; Olvera, 1999; Marinez, 2007; Garretón, 2007; Cunill, 2004; Oszlak, 2007), we refuse both to embellish it and to demonize it, and we focus on its potential for democratization. We have clearly noted theoretical debates currently under way, for instance in the periodical *Voluntas*, as to the advantages and disadvantages of definitions of civil society that are exclusively normative (concerned with differentiating between "good" and "bad" organizations), or solely descriptive (embarrassed at the possibility of including such organizations as Al-Qaeda within civil society) (Munck, 2006). We opt for a definition that is predominantly descriptive while retaining some elements put forward by Anheier: "Global civil society is the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organizations, networks, and individuals that are (…)[4] located *between* the family, the state, and the market" (2007: 10–11). In this definition, we find it helpful to differentiate the sphere of civil society not only from the state and the market, but also from the family. To pinpoint accurately the strengths and limitations of civil society with regard to the democratization of public policy, one must not ignore its relations with the state, the market and the family. As advocated by Garretón (2007: 48-50), one must take into account the socio-historical and socio-political matrix within which civil society exists, without erasing the place of conflict.

[3] Labour and management organizations represent stakeholders anchored in the labour market but, as associations safeguarding their members' rights and interests, they are also located in civil society.

[4] In this quotation, we have not retained the words "*based on civility*" as added by Anheier in an effort to revise an earlier definition so as to take into account criticisms from a current of literature that sought a more normative definition. We do not follow Anheier's route in this, because his addition of a qualitative criterion such as "based on civility" generates more problems than it solves. In fact, how does one set about differentiating organizations based on civility from those that are not?

As to the concept of *third sector*, we have used it for the past 15 years or so, favouring a current of European literature[5] which is interested both in social policy and in the possibly innovative input of third sector organizations in the democratization of social and public policy (Defourny and Monzon Campos, 1992; Means and Smith, 1994; Lewis, 1999 and 2004; Evers and Laville, 2004). The concept of third sector is narrower than that of civil society. But it is broader than that of social economy even if, in our earlier writings, we often treated them as synonyms (Vaillancourt et al, 2004), a little like Defourny and Monzon Campos (1992) and Evers and Laville (2004).

Concerning the concepts of *social economy*, *solidarity economy* and *social and solidarity economy*, let us begin by pointing out that we do not distinguish significantly between the concepts of social economy and solidarity economy. We would add that we like to use the expression social and solidarity economy, in the tradition of CIRIEC Canada (1998), the *Groupe d'économie solidaire du Québec* (GESQ) and the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS).[6] Moreover, we subscribe to a broad, inclusive definition of the social economy which makes room for both the market and the non-market components, for instance, community and co-operative organizations which offer local services to individuals without charging user fees for those services (Vaillancourt et al, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2006 and 2008). As a result, stakeholders from the social economy can be anchored in both civil society (in particular for the non-market social economy) and the market (in particular for the market social economy).

The broad, inclusive definition of the social economy which we advocate emphasizes values and is influenced by the contribution of Belgian researchers (Defourny, Develtère and Fonteneau, 2001). It was taken up in Quebec by the *Chantier de l'économie sociale* (2001) and accepted by the Quebec government and the social partners at the October 1996 Summit on the Economy and Employment (Lévesque, Girard and Malo, 2001). According to that definition:

> "Social economy organizations produce goods and services with a clear social mission and have these ideal-type characteristics and objectives:
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> - The mission is services to members and communities and non-profit oriented.
> - Management is independent of government.
> - Democratic decision-making by workers and/or users.
> - People have priority over capital.
> - Participation, empowerment, individual, and collective responsibility." (*Chantier de l'économie sociale*, 2001: 29; Vaillancourt et al, 2004: 315).

[5] In the European tradition, the third sector tends less to replace the state than to counterbalance it in the context of the post-welfare state crisis. In our review of the literature and debates on the third sector, within for example the activities of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), we noticed that Latin Americans tended to follow the U.S. tradition more than the European, so emphasizing the third sector is less consistent with placing greater emphasis on the state.

[6] In Quebec, we made the deliberate choice in 1998 not to oppose the concepts of social and solidarity economy, and to put forward a perspective of social and solidarity economy that targets a new development model that stands out from both neo-liberalism and statism (CIRIEC Canada, 1998; Lévesque, 2003; Favreau, 2005 and 2006). This made-in-Quebec choice differs from the choice made in France by some solidarity economy movements which, for reasons associated with France's socio-historical context, prefer to oppose the concepts of solidarity economy and social economy strongly (Laville, 1994: 1-90). In Latin America, in particular in Brazil, one can observe a number of ongoing debates concerning the timeliness of opposing the concepts of social and solidarity economy. Thus, in the first issue of the journal *La Otra Economia*, the editor presented it as "the Latin American periodical of the social and solidarity economy." But, when one looks at the content of that issue, one discovers that several authors were tempted to prefer the term solidarity economy to the term social economy. Similarly, in the collective work published under the direction of Cattani (2004), most of the authors from Brazil and Argentina preferred to use the concept of solidarity economy.

The legal status of these organizations and enterprises may be that of co-operatives, associations or mutual organizations.

Public Policy

The concept of public policy[7] encompasses that of social policy.[8] At the same time, it shares many of the features of social policy. Public policy nevertheless is broader than social policy. It can also include policy with respect to education, transportation, immigration, housing, local and industrial development, environment, and so on.

The expression "public policy," just like "social policy," contains the word "*policy*," which refers to *intervention by the state or public authorities*. This intervention tends to redistribute income and support citizenship. It takes place in order to *foster the general interest* that is jeopardized when one relies merely on the operation of market laws or the resources of family solidarity alone. The pursuit of the general interest involves functions of *de-marketization* and *de-familialization* on the part of the state**,** to use the expressions formulated by Esping-Anderson (1999). Intervention by the public authorities may take a large variety of forms, including legislation, regulations, policy statements, white papers, budget announcements and fiscal measures. Without state intervention, there is no public policy. But by relying solely on state intervention, it is difficult to obtain quality social and public policy. And that is where the distinction between co-construction and co-production of policy starts to be helpful.

In recent writings devoted to the definition of social policy with implications for the definition of public policy (Vaillancourt and Ducharme, 2001; Vaillancourt, in Tremblay, Tremblay and Tremblay, 2006: 25–28), we have applied ourselves to reconciling two goals: *to value state intervention, and to find a way of doing so without erasing the input from stakeholders from civil society and the market, in particular those from the social economy*. This work is more necessary than ever since the end of the golden age of welfare state era policy. In fact, in the 1970s and 1980s, we had often acquired the habit, in progressive circles, of valuing intervention by the state in defining its role as if the state were the sole architect of social and public policy. But with the hindsight gained following the welfare state and employment crisis of the 1980s, some progressive circles tried to adjust their focus so as to tighten the links between that policy and the needs of the communities concerned (Jetté et al, 2000; Vaillancourt, Aubry and Jetté, 2003; Vaillancourt et al, 2004). To borrow another of Garretón's expressions, the Left's concern with seeking a new paradigm for development became twofold: How to foster "a protective state that is much more active in economic life and in the task of redistribution" while permitting "greater control by the citizen of both the market and the state?" (Garretón, 2007: 193–194).

To break down the various stages involved in the genesis of public policy, we often refer to *six dimensions*: 1) identification of the *main goals* for attaining the general interest;[9] 2) choice of *regulation* standards to foster quality; 3) determination of *funding* means (state, private, mixed, etc.); 4) definition of responsibility-sharing with respect to *management*; 5) arrangement of responsibility-sharing with respect to the *delivery* of services belonging to public policy; 6) establishment of the policy for *evaluating* public policy.

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[7] A number of ideas on public policy developed in Vaillancourt and Charpentier (2005: 111–7) are restated here.

[8] Owing to our more extensive research experience in the social policy field, one specific component of public policy among others, we tend to base our work more on our theoretical, historical and empirical knowledge developed in the field of social policy to address the concept and reality of public policy.

[9] We grant that the general interest is never totally attained at a given moment in a given society. It is an ideal type which societies may come close to achieving provided they tend toward it with all their strength by the appropriate means.

This breaking-down of public policy into six components can help us in examining the processes of co-construction and co-production in a detailed, precise manner, as we shall see in the following sections. This is provided, however, that we do not do so with a mechanical rigidity that would lead us to lose sight of the fact that public policy, once adopted, never becomes permanent. On the contrary, it always remains exposed to being amended once again, and this gives rise to multiple phases of construction, de-construction and re-construction. This means that the institutional arrangements stemming from the adoption of public policy remain constantly likely to move and that, as a result, the production and co-construction of public policy often have to be begun again.

II- Co-production of Public Policy

The term co-production is often heard in common parlance, for instance with respect to co-production of movies. The international literature on co-production is extensive, and has existed for the past 30 years or more. It looks on the one hand at the co-production of services of public interest to designate activities (or organizations or enterprises) in which users (or clients or citizens) participate in production and management on the same basis as employees (Laville, 2005).[10] On the other hand, there is also research literature specifically concerning the co-production of public policy, and that is what interests us here.

Four Co-production Models

Co-production concerns *the application* (or organization or production) of public policy. It occurs when the state is not alone in being involved in the implementation of a public policy, but shares responsibility with non-state organizations, from the private sector, the third sector, or both sectors at once. Four scenarios may be seen here.

- *First scenario: there is not co-production, but monoproduction*. The policy is funded from the public purse; it is administered by organizations from the state public sector; the services are delivered by public sector employees. In Quebec, the policy on income security (or social assistance) is organized according to that model.

- *Second scenario: there is co-production, with exclusive or principal participation by organizations from the private sector*. This gives rise to a form of public-private partnership (PPP). In Quebec, public policy on accommodation and housing for dependent seniors is organized according to this model insofar as private for-profit residences constitute the main component of the service offering, whereas components coming under the public sector and the third sector remain in the minority (Vaillancourt and Charpentier, 2005). In a number of societies and policy fields, this type of configuration ties in with a *neo-liberal perspective* preoccupied with arranging the disengagement or non-engagement of the state and giving precedence to market logic (Rouillard et al, 2004; Rouillard, 2006). A number of privatization policies introduced in Brazil and Argentina during the 1990s followed this model.

- *Third scenario: there is co-production, with principal or exclusive participation by organizations from the third sector*. The state entrusts the administration and delivery of part or all of homecare services to co-operatives or non-profit associations, that is, stakeholders from the social economy. In Quebec, the family policy with respect to childcare centres implemented since 1997 is organized according to this model. Funding and regulation of the policy lies primarily with the

[10] In another paper, we took a close look at the literature on the co-production of services of public interest, in particular the literature from administrative sciences and sociology of work (Vaillancourt, 2008: 3–5). This question is also addressed by Pestoff, Osborne and Brandsen (2007: 593).

public sector, but the administration and delivery of services is the responsibility of third sector organizations. We can observe that this type of co-production often arises in the field of local services: transportation; garbage collection; waste recycling; food distribution; social housing; development of parks and public spaces; social services; etc. (Bresser and Cunill, 1998; Batley, 2007; Ndiaye, 2005). A number of researchers, including Oscar Oszlak, have highlighted the potential contribution of NGOs in that regard: "NGOs can play a crucial role in the co-production and co-management of socially valuable services." (2007: 58).

- *Fourth scenario: there is co-production, with mixed participation by organizations from the private sector and the third sector*. In this case, the administration and delivery of homecare services is the responsibility of a mix of organizations from the public sector, the private sector and the third sector, in varying proportions. The prevailing model in Quebec in home services policy concerning the elderly and disabled is similar to this mixed scenario. The service offering is primarily the responsibility of the public sector, but significant components come under the private sector and third sector. This type of co-production has been described as a "welfare mix" or "mixed economy of welfare" by some researchers (Evers and Laville, 2004: 14–17, 137, 169; Pestoff, 2006: 511–513).

In short, the co-production of policy is deployed *at an organizational level* (in the organization of products and services), and it is possible to find it on a *macro* level (in a given national policy in a given specific public policy area) or on a *micro* level (in a given public policy of a given municipal administration) (Rich, 1981; Brito, 2002; Bifarello, 2000; Ndiaye, 2005; Kliksberg, 2007).

In our own research work and in this paper, we are especially interested in the third scenario concerning co-production, that is, in the model of co-production calling significantly on participation by organizations from the third sector and the social economy. It is not a question of idealizing this model and wanting to impose it in all areas of public policy. We should mention immediately, to avoid any misunderstanding, that *the contribution of co-production to the democratization of public policy stems less from the number of stakeholders from the third sector present in this policy than from the quality of the relations created between the state and the third sector* (Vaillancourt and Laville, 1998; Lewis, 1999 and 2004; Pestoff, 2006; Proulx, Bourque and Savard, 2007).

In any case, co-production involving participation by the third sector gives rise to a variety of socio-economic practices which abound in the societies of the South (Bresser and Cunill, 1998; Bifarello, 2000; Ndiaye, 2005; Vitale, 2005; Batley, 2007) and the North (Vaillancourt and Laville, 1998; Lewis, 1999 and 2004; Pestoff, 2006; Proulx, Bourque and Savard, 2007). Several researchers have studied this form of co-production, seeing in it a possible contribution to greater democratization of the economy and society (Favreau and Salam Fall, 2007; Cunill, 2004; Pestoff, 2006).

Among these authors, there are two whose contribution we wish to emphasize: Nuria Cunill and Victor Pestoff.

Nuria Cunill's Contribution

We will spend less time on *the contribution of Nuria Cunill*, a Chilean public administration expert belonging to the progressive CLAD movement, because we have had the opportunity to examine her theoretical contribution in greater depth elsewhere (Vaillancourt, 2007b: 11–12). In her writings, Nuria Cunill formally uses the concept of co-production of public policy. But she does not formally use those of third sector and social and solidarity economy, while nevertheless showing great sensitivity toward the principles and values of the social and solidarity economy. In a highly influential text on the co-production of public policy, Cunill (2004) works to show that co-production could have a more democratizing scope

if the state, in seeking its partners, were to tear its eyes away from the market (and private, for-profit enterprises) and begin to see the possible contribution of another type of stakeholders. She shows this sensitivity by making the distinction between two forms of private realities, namely, the for-profit private sector "guided by market logic" and the "private sector guided by the logic of solidarity," referring among other things to co-operatives and certain NGOs (Cunill, 2004: 26–28).[11] In so doing, Cunill points to a scenario of *solidarity-based co-production* or co-production "guided by the logic of solidarity." Implicitly at least, hers stands out from a bipolar approach (public / private), and opens the way to a tripolar framework (state / market / third sector).[12]

Victor Pestoff's Contribution

There is also *the contribution of Victor Pestoff*, a U.S.-born Swedish political scientist who has often contributed to the work of CIRIEC International by conducting case studies on participation by the third sector in the transformation of public policy in Sweden. In a recent article entitled "Citizens and co-production of welfare services," Pestoff reported on comparative research under way in eight European countries concerning childcare services. In using the concept of co-production, Pestoff looks at the configuration of responsibility-sharing among the state, the private sector and the third sector in public policy under certain Swedish municipalities. He expresses his interest in a co-production framework in which the role of the state concerns funding and regulation, while that of the third sector focusses on management and delivery of welfare services (Pestoff, 2006: 517). He argues in his article that, when third sector organizations are associated with the co-production of collective child services, they have a capacity to broaden and deepen the democratic governance exercised by the public authorities. These forms of governance that are open to participation by the third sector are often deployed, in Sweden, for instance, in local areas under the aegis of municipal public authorities. The issue then becomes the sharing of power and responsibility (financial, political, educational and social) among a variety of collective stakeholders (including the parents of children in childcare centres and childcare centre personnel) and the public authorities concerned in the local area (2006: 511–513). Pestoff thus displays his preference for services provided by the third sector, emphasizing that parents' participation is easier there than in public or private, for-profit services (Pestoff, 2006: 515). In short, for Pestoff, it is third sector organizations that are the best placed to foster this plural participation with a "democratizing" reach. This is clearly visible on certain conditions, such as being able to count on adequate public funding (2006: 515) and appropriate regulation (2006: 517).

In our view, the contribution of Cunill, Pestoff and other authors in the same theoretical vein is important for the democratization of public policy. But this contribution *appears to be limited to the organizational dimension* of public policy, insofar as participation appears to be valued at the moment when policy is applied, and not necessarily at the moment when it is defined. With such a viewpoint, we find ourselves close to the boundary between co-production and co-construction of public policy, but we do not cross it, and to our mind that is regrettable.

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11 Here is a significant extract from Cunill's paper: "Co-operative structures self-managed by local communities for the delivery of public services are probably the maximum expression of citizens' influence on public administration, as well as being the model par excellence of societal government. This type of institution which "empowers" citizens to exercise control over themselves more than over others is at the other extreme from the bureaucratic model that generates political passivity and dependency" (Cunill, 2004: 26). [Our translation]

12 This openness of Nuria Cunill's to a tripolar framework is expressed even more clearly in an unpublished paper (Cunill, forthcoming in 2008).

III- Co-construction of Public Policy and Contribution of the Social Economy

We have seen that co-production of public policy, especially when arranged according to the third scenario, which entrusts a significant role to stakeholders from the third sector, can constitute a major advance for democratization. But this advance remains limited and incomplete if it is limited to the organizational dimension. To go beyond this limitation, co-production has to be combined with elements of true co-construction, which is deployed at an institutional level in relation to the establishment of the general directions and foundational elements of the public policy itself.

In this section, we therefore look at the co-construction of public policy, trying to pinpoint various configurations with which it may be associated and giving priority to the features of a democratic configuration in which the social economy provides significant input. Unlike the concept of co-production, that of co-construction of public policy receives little mention in the literature, hence the importance of benchmarking it clearly.

As we mentioned earlier, co-construction concerns public policy when it is being designed and not merely when it is being implemented. It is deployed upstream, in other words, when public policy is being conceived. Our interest in the co-construction of public policy is tied to the idea that it can become more democratic if the state agrees not to construct it all on its own. We suggest that the democratization of such policy would gain from this, at least in some societies, at certain moments in certain specific policy areas, if the state worked to co-construct it by partnering with stakeholders from the market and civil society, not to mention from the social economy.

To distinguish the conditions of the co-construction model which interests us, it is enlightening to state a variety of scenarios in which the state constructs policy on its own or co-constructs it with other socio-economic agents.

Monoconstruction of Public Policy

There are moments in history and societies where the state is not a co-constructor of public policy insofar as it constructs public policy all on its own. To grasp the concept of the state as a partner in the co-construction of policy, it is helpful to distinguish it from its opposite.

It is a question here of an authoritarian, hierarchical, entrepreneurial state which emerged in several *Northern countries*, during the *Trente Glorieuses*, the 30 years following World War II (Enjolras, 2005 and 2006; Vaillancourt, 2007b). Examples include the French state and the Canadian federal state of 1945–1975, and the Quebec state of the Quiet Revolution and the Castonguay reform of the 1960s and 1970s. In these scenarios, the classic conception of accountability in representative democracy makes elected officials solely accountable. It is based on lessons drawn from historical periods prior to 1945–1975 during which the state was tossed at will by market forces, the family and civil society. But this leads directly to the shortcomings of the hierarchical state which, to stand out more clearly from the laissez-faire attitude in vogue during the 1930s crisis, sometimes found itself at the other end of the pendulum.

In the countries of the South, particularly in Latin America, the form of authoritarian state that constructs public policy on its own—or monoconstructs—has historically prevailed in other forms than in the North. In some countries, the trend to monoconstruct public policy remains a legacy of the military dictatorships that prevailed in Chile from 1973 to 1989 (Garretón, 2007: 77–82), Brazil from 1965 to 1980 (Dagnino, 2002: 21–76), Argentina from 1976 to 1983 (Oszlak, 2007), Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and so on. Certainly, since the 1980s and 1990s, those countries have made the transition to democracy, but that

democracy often remains fragile, incomplete and hampered by the persistence of authoritarian enclaves. Other countries did not formally experience military dictatorships, but they did undergo long periods of civil war, coups d'état and revolutionary turmoil, as in Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Or they experienced a 70-year period of single-party rule, as in Mexico until 2000 (Garretón, 2007: 42–44; Marinez, 2007: 332–333). There is also the unique case of that other country—Haiti—which formally won its independence as far back as 1804 but which, over the following 200 years, for one reason or another, including the 29 years of dictatorship under Duvalier Father and Son (1957–1986), has always awaited a lasting transition to democratic life and the emergence of a state of law (Woog, 2004; Élie, 2006).

Thus, in both Northern and Southern societies, the model of monoconstruction of public policy remains current and hinders the transition to co-construction. One is often in the presence of a form of interventionist, bureaucratic state which tends to see itself as a referee above the fray, like a great planner, entrepreneur and operator. This state acts in an authoritarian manner, seeing itself as solely responsible for public policy. This is all compatible with the recourse to co-production in one form or another, as there is nothing to prevent the state from constructing its policy alone, while using the private sector and third sector to implement it.

Neoliberal Co-construction

For there to be co-construction of public policy, it is necessary for *the state to favour open forms of governance which make room for participation by social stakeholders from non-state sectors, that is, the market and civil society*. Before looking at the benefits of this form of co-construction, it is important to remember that, in the recent evolution of capitalist societies, in various Northern and Southern countries, many co-constructed public policies were created as a result of special links established between the state and socio-economic elites anchored in market forces. Without returning to simplistic representations borrowed from the Marxist structuralism made popular during the 1970s, which suggested that the state is an instrument at the service of the dominant classes (Harnecker, 1971),[13] it has to be recognized that the state is not neutral. It leans toward certain social forces rather than others, and is anchored in inegalitarian social relationships marked by class, gender, intercultural and other divisions.

In short, to be in a position to grasp more clearly and foster the possible, desirable contribution of the market and civil society to the co-construction of public policy, it should be recognized that co-construction can be conceptualized and operationalized in various ways, some of which may be less compatible than others with the pursuit of the general interest. Consider two forms of co-construction in particular, neo-liberal co-construction and corporatist co-construction. In these two scenarios, the state enters into practices of policy co-construction. But the goal of pursuing the general interest is abandoned.

In *neo-liberal co-construction*, in vogue in the past few years in several countries, in particular with the popularity of the dominant managerial current of New Public Management (NPM) and the formula of public-private partnerships (PPPs), the state is encouraged to construct public policy by co-operating with the private sector, that is, with the dominant socio-economic agents in the market economy. In this neoliberal co-construction, there are institutional arrangements that favour competitive regulation often described as "Quasi-Markets" in the UK literature on social policy. This Quasi-Market regulation may be recognized by the fact that the state opens up the construction and production of policy to participation by organizations from the public, private and third sectors, while inviting those organizations to compete with one another for contracts (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993; Means and Smith, 1994; Lewis, 1999, 2004). It

[13] We refer here to a book by Marta Harnecker (1971), a Chilean disciple of Louis Althusser. This work was frequently re-issued at the time, and its publication had a major influence on the Marxist structuralism current in several Latin American countries, and in Quebec, during the 1970s.

embodies a logic of market-driven instrumentalization, for instance through performance-related contractual clauses or reporting methods built into service agreements. Finally, it ties in with a logic of "shedding the load" of public responsibilities onto other stakeholders, at lower cost and with a fragile guarantee as to quality of services and jobs.

Corporatist Co-construction

There is also the model of *corporatist co-construction* that is well known in Latin America. This model was also in vogue in Quebec in more traditional forms during the 1940s and 1950s, and in more modern forms during the 1970s and 1980s with the formula of sectoral socio-economic summits. In the two variants of the model, there is a form of co-operation between stakeholders from political society, the labour market and civil society. But these relations are deployed along lines that remain associated with unequal representation. Some sectors of socio-economic activity and stakeholders associated with labour and management circles are included in the dialogue and deliberation with the state, whereas others are excluded. The result is that certain groups of stakeholders have more weight than others, and that the co-construction of public policy is monopolized by special interests[14] (Bresser Pereira and Cunill, 1998; Cunill, 2004; Brugué, 2004; Oszlak, 2007; Enjolras, 2006; Thériault, 2003; Garretón, 2007; Lévesque, 2007).

Democratic, Solidarity-based Co-construction

The democratic, solidarity-based co-construction that interests us is consistent with the pursuit of the general interest and keeps its distance from the neo-liberal and corporatist configurations. We will identify four features of this configuration.

First, the state remains a partner like no other. The thesis of co-construction suggests that the state co-constructs policy by co-operating with co-architects from the market and civil society. As mentioned in our work on the *État stratège* (Vaillancourt, 2007b), the thesis of co-construction does not mean the state stands on exactly the same footing as the other non-state stakeholders with which it co-constructs. Ultimately, the state has to rule alone on disagreements and is the one making the final decisions (Pierre and Peters, 2000). Certainly, it develops policy in close co-operation with stakeholders from the market economy and civil society.[15] It dialogues, interacts and deliberates with non-state stakeholders. It remains both above and close to them. In that way, it avoids becoming enclosed in a position of self-sufficiency and omnipotence.

Second, democratic co-construction builds on a reform of the state that enables it to become a partner of civil society without for all that ceasing to be a partner of stakeholders from the market economy. It differs from an anti-capitalist co-construction in which the state would be the partner of civil society

[14] In Latin American countries such as Mexico and Argentina, corporatism led to highly split, clientelist social policies that offer advantages to certain social groups (unionized civil servants, for instance) while leaving large segments of society without any social protection.

[15] It should be emphasized that the debate is coloured by each stakeholder's special interests. The important thing here is the existence of public spaces where the stakeholders can become involved, even if often the policy defined does not fully satisfy each stakeholder's particular interest. For instance, in the case of the definition and legitimization of environmental policy in Quebec, we find participation by the private sector and civil society, and by the state. There are certain spaces in which, one way or another, these three types of stakeholders can be involved in co-construction (*Conférence régionale des élus, Conseil régional de l'environnement, Bureau des audiences publiques sur l'environnement* [BAPE], etc.). But this does not mean that the final outcome always meets the expectations of all the stakeholders involved (Maldonado González, forthcoming in 2008).

against the stakeholders from and principles of the market economy.[16] It ties in with a *plural economy perspective* (Lévesque, Bourque and Forgues, 2001: 59–65), having drawn lessons from the failures of real socialism in the former Communist countries since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Thus, it seeks a break with neo-liberalism, but not with the market economy (Julliard, 2007). It targets a reform of the state which Jon Pierre (2005) calls "participatory reform." This reform refuses to remain focussed on the state or the market. In this reform, the "state's strength derives from its capacity to call on the resources of all segments of society with a view to achieving collective goals and meeting the collective interest" (Pierre, 2005). This vision is timely in the countries of both the South and the North (Salam Fall, Favreau and Larose, 2004: 1–43; Ndiaye, 2005).

Third, democratic co-construction involves a deliberation between the best of representative democracy and the best of participatory democracy (Thériault, 2003; Cunill, 2004; Enjolras, 2006). This perspective differs from certain vogues which on the one hand encourage the demonization of representative democracy (on the grounds that all politicians are dishonest) and on the other hand discredit participatory democracy (on the grounds that it immobilizes the state by making it hostage to interest groups). While acknowledging that representative democracy ultimately has the last word, the co-construction promoted here implies that elected officials establish open, inclusive forms of governance in which dialogue is favoured between the elected officials and the leaders of the participatory democracy. This supposes the existence of interfaces, forums for mediation and deliberation, public spaces, encouraging gateways (Enjolras, 2006; Dagnino, 2002). This also requires qualities of democratic facilitation both from the leaders of the state and political parties, and from the leaders of civil society. Competent, democratic political facilitation and leadership here involves the ability to recognize and manage conflict, and foster the broadening of forms of governance by including socio-economic and socio-political stakeholders that are often excluded, or rarely listened to (Brito, 2002; Brugué, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007b).

Fourth, the democratic, solidarity-based co-construction of quality public policy involves recognition of the participation by stakeholders from the social economy as well as a partner-type relationship between the state and those stakeholders. It is not a case here of asking for a privilege for the social economy as if one wanted it to become a pressure group that would dictate to the public authorities its order in terms of public policy. Rather, it is a case of enabling the social economy to express its voice among those of other stakeholders at the moment when public policy and programs are defined. The issue is that of enabling the social economy to move beyond the status of a mere tool or instrument of the state in the application of public policy plans co-constructed without it. It is that of permitting the establishment of a *partner-type relationship, that is, a non-instrumental relationship*, between the state and the social economy. In a partnership interface, stakeholders from the social economy retain a degree of *autonomy* in relation to the state (Proulx, Bourque and Savard, 2007; Lewis, 1999 and 2004; Vaillancourt and Laville, 1998; Thiry and Lévesque, forthcoming in 2008).

In short, seen this way, solidarity-based co-construction is not a luxury, but a necessity for a democracy. In fact, when stakeholders from civil society and the social economy are forgotten or instrumentalized in the relationship with the state, public policy is impoverished, because it reproduces the downside of competitive or bureaucratic regulation. At the same time, this public policy becomes less fair and inclusive. Hence the criticism addressed by the social economy at the institutional arrangements most often found in PPP-style initiatives. This criticism blames PPPs for often being similar to a binary co-construction calling exclusively on the state / market pairing and depriving itself of the input from the social economy (*Conseil de la coopération du Québec*, 2004; *Chantier de l'économie sociale*, 2001, 2005; Lévesque, 2003; Vaillancourt, 2007b).

[16] Along with other authors (Favreau, 2005; Julliard, 2007; Garreton, 2007: 91–2), we feel it is important to differentiate clearly between the break from capitalism and that from neo-liberalism, and this invites us to talk of capitalism and the alternatives in the plural, and not just in the singular.

Thus, after maintaining our distance both from the monoconstruction model and from the neo-liberal and corporatist co-construction models, we have underscored our preference for a democratic co-construction model that builds both on participation by stakeholders from the market and civil society and on that of the social economy that promises social innovation based on successful experiments.

IV- Illustration of the Democratic Co-construction Model Using the Case of Social Housing[17]

To facilitate a better understanding of the scope of our theoretical positions, we will illustrate our thesis using concrete cases of social policy reform that have occurred in Canada, and more specifically in Quebec. This will make it possible to see that the democratic and solidarity-based model of co-production and co-construction of public policy presented above constitutes more than a conceptual device. It is a model that has tangibly left its mark on the recent history of social development in Quebec. To document this statement, we will first briefly run over the history of social policy, then we will look at the case of social housing.

Background to Social Policy in Three Stages

In view of the subject of study chosen in this paper, we can "re-read" the history of social policy by distinguishing *three stages*.[18]

In the *first stage* (1920–1960), the Quebec state was very reluctant to intervene in social policy, and when it did so, it favoured co-production, but not co-construction of public policy. In this co-production, in the health and welfare field, for instance, there was strong use of third sector organizations largely dominated by the Church. One thinks, for instance, of the (non-profit) social service agencies of the 1950s and 1960s. In this co-production, relations between the state and third sector organizations remained instrumental rather than partnership-based.

In a *second stage* (1960–1980) corresponding to the development of the Quiet Revolution and the Castonguay reform, the Quebec social state intervened relatively alone to construct and produce welfare state-type social policy (Jetté et al, 2000). This led to a period of *monoconstruction* of public policy along with a moderate dose of co-production. In this co-production, stakeholders from the third sector and the social economy had a real but marginal presence and a low profile (Jetté, 2005 and 2008). Emphasizing the "state public sector" combines with minimizing the value of the "non-state public sector."

In a *third stage* (1980–2008), which arose in a context of crisis and transformation of the welfare state, more co-production and co-construction of social policy is to be found, with, in some fields, participation by stakeholders from the market and civil society within which the social economy is present and recognized, particularly in certain social policy reforms from the mid-1990s onward (Vaillancourt, 2003; Jetté, 2005; Ulysse and Lesemann, 2007).

Specifically, it was during this third stage that certain innovative reforms made their appearance, and these clearly illustrate the democratic, solidarity-based configuration of co-construction of public policy presented in Section 3. In these reforms one finds, to varying degrees, partnership-based relations between the state and the social economy.

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[17] Marie-Noëlle Ducharme's comments and suggestions were very helpful to us in writing this section.
[18] For a more detailed presentation of this historical re-reading, see Vaillancourt, 2008: 16–18 and 2007b: 14–19.

The Case of Social Housing

In our research papers over the past 10 years, we have closely monitored the evolution of several social policy reforms which illustrate the model of solidarity-based co-construction presented above. We looked among other things at the issues of co-operation between community organizations in the health and social services field, and in the area of the labour market integration of socially vulnerable individuals, such as young people and disabled persons. We studied the case of family social policy, which since 1997 has led to the development of 1,000 childcare centres caring for children aged 0–5. We worked on the transformation of public policy concerning institutional and community care for frail elderly people as well as disabled persons. We also closely monitored public policy trends with respect to social housing for economically and socially vulnerable individuals.[19] In all these reforms one finds, in varying configurations, a degree of participation by stakeholders from the social economy and the third sector in forms of co-production and co-construction of public policy. But since we lack space here to appraise each case, we shall restrict ourselves to social housing.

The social housing field in Quebec is a fascinating laboratory with respect to *social innovation*, in terms of both social practices and public policy. Social housing practices and policy evolved from a mode comprising elements of co-production (until 1990) to a mode resolutely focussed on the co-production and co-construction of public policy, along with strong participation by the social economy. To grasp this statement more clearly, let us first look at the context.

First, these social innovations occurred paradoxically in difficult budgetary conditions. On the one hand, Canada's provinces and territories have little fiscal leeway for creating social housing. On the other hand, from 1993 onward, there was a brutal withdrawal of joint funding by the federal state. This funding had made it possible, since the 1950s, to share the cost of new social housing programs put forward by the provincial and territorial governments.[20] In this difficult context, Quebec was, along with British Columbia and Manitoba, one of the few Canadian provinces to develop new social housing programs (Vaillancourt and Ducharme, 2001; Dansereau, 2005: 22–23).

Second, these innovations often occurred through the social practices which emerged in a local or regional area, without even benefiting from a public policy that contributed to supporting them. Once these innovative social practices proved their worth and were recognized as successful experiments, they began to be publicized and become points of reference, and this had the effect of encouraging public decision-makers to develop new public policy to support such practices. In this way, public policy helps disseminate and perpetuate timely innovations tested in conclusive experiments. That is what we call the transition from experimentation to institutionalization.

Third, the main protagonists of social housing innovations come from the third sector and the public sector. Among stakeholders from the third sector and the social economy are the housing co-operatives and NPOs, as well as their regional and province-wide federations. There are also the *Groupes de ressources techniques* (GRT); the *Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain* (FRAPRU); low-income housing tenant associations and their Quebec-wide federation, and so on. Stakeholders from the public sector are also very involved, in particular with the development of community action practices in

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[19] See a number of papers in which these tangible cases of reform are analysed in greater depth: Vaillancourt and Tremblay, 2002: 37–58; Vaillancourt, 2003; Vaillancourt, Aubry and Jetté, 2003; Vaillancourt et al, 2004; Vaillancourt, 2007b: 18–22; Jetté, 2005 and 2008.

[20] Since 2000, the federal government has begun once again to participate in the funding of certain provincial initiatives. But it has done so timidly in reference to provincial programs concerning narrowly targeted clienteles (such as the homeless).

low-income housing (Morin, Aubry and Vaillancourt, 2007; Morin, 2007). Among stakeholders from the public sector, there are of course the elected officials responsible for housing issues in the Quebec state. There are also managers and practitioners from the municipal housing bureaus, the *Société d'habitation du Québec* (SHQ), the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and other provincial, regional and local public agencies called upon to work with stakeholders from the housing sector. We are thinking among others of several players in the health and social services network. In fact, for the past 20 years, the social innovations that have led to advances in public practices and policy in social housing have often been the outcome of close co-operation between social economy and public sector stakeholders.

Here now are *four illustrations of participation by the social economy and the third sector* in the co-production and co-construction of public policy on social housing.

The first example is proof positive of the participation by the social economy in the co-production of public policy. This participation began as early as the 1960s, but increased during the 1970s, when the federal state altered its social housing cost-sharing programs so as to permit the provinces taking advantage of them to develop new social housing units that could come under not only the public sector (i.e., the low-income housing formula), but also housing co-operatives and non-profit organizations (NPOs). The Quebec government was quick to take advantage of this change in federal policy. From the 1970s onward, it developed programs in the housing field that broke with monoproduction and built on co-production.[21] In fact, under these programs, the new housing units created came from both the social economy and the public sector. Low-income housing continued to be built, but at the same time the development of housing co-operatives and NPOs was favoured. As the Quebec state had been slow adopting its housing policy (in 1967), the golden age of low-income housing was not as long-lived in Quebec as it was elsewhere in Canada. As a result, from the 1980s and in particular from the 1990s, the place of the social economy in the total number of housing units became historically greater in Quebec than in the other provinces. This trend was accentuated from 1997 onward, with the implementation of the *AccèsLogis* program. This Quebec program gives priority to projects from local areas and favours participation by the social economy in the application of public policy on housing. Through *AccèsLogis*, 20,000 new social housing units were developed from 1997 to 2007. And housing co-operatives and NPOs accounted for the vast majority of these units (Vaillancourt and Ducharme, 2001; Ducharme, 2006).

*The second example of innovation concerns the creation of technical resource groups (*Groupes de ressources techniques*, or GRTs) in the late 1970s, a device which contributed to consolidation of the participation by the social economy in the co-production of public policy on housing in Quebec*. The recognition and support of GRTs by the Quebec state marked the appearance of a new tool which fostered the emergence of several housing innovations. The GRTs are non-profit organizations, that is, organizations coming not under the public sector but under the third sector. They were entrusted with a major role within the application of Quebec's public policy on housing for the past 25 years. They share the values of participation, democratization, accessibility and local development specific to the social economy. They are essential travelling companions for the housing co-operatives and NPOs (Bouchard and Hudon, 2005).

*Quebec's community housing fund (*Fonds québécois d'habitation communautaire*, or FQHC) is a third example testifying to the participation by the social economy not only in the co-production but also in the co-construction of public policy*. The FQHC was set up in 1997 with the mission of promoting the

[21] While this transition was taking place from monoproduction to co-production of Quebec's housing policy, this policy, like the federal policy, remained somewhat monoconstructed, inasmuch as the definition of policy remained the business of the state alone. From the 1990s, Quebec public policy would evolve toward co-construction insofar as the third sector partners associated with the production would finally succeed in imposing themselves in the development of several areas of public policy itself.

development of social housing in the social economy sector. While created by the Quebec state, it has a structure consisting of a majority of stakeholders from various components of the social economy. It plays the role of gateway between the public sector, third sector and private sector. It is an intermediary body, a public space for deliberation which favours a reconciliation between the input from representative democracy and that from participatory democracy in public policy decision-making (Ducharme and Vaillancourt, 2000 and 2006; Dansereau, 2005; Bouchard and Hudon, 2005). The FQHC symbolizes and promotes the partnership between the third sector and the public sector in social housing, as three researchers explain:

> "In Quebec, groups of non-profit organizations (NPOs) and co-operatives also play a major role as partners of the public authorities, with which they regularly negotiate the application of policy and programs. These organizations have become front-line players on the social housing scene; notably, they were associated with the creation, in 1997, of the *Fonds québécois de l'habitation communautaire* (a mediating and consultation body called upon to monitor the application of community-type social housing programs) and are among its managers." (Divay, Séguin and Sénéchal, in Dansereau, 2005: 37) [Our translation]

This quotation draws attention to the participation by the FQHC and the third sector not only in the co-production of housing practices and policy, but also in their co-construction. That is what the researchers from the INRS are saying when they point out that stakeholders from the third sector were "associated with the creation of the FQHC" or that they "regularly negotiate the application of policy and programs." The FQHC is an original device which arose from co-construction and fosters it in return. It played a key role in particular in the development of the *AccèsLogis* and *Affordable Housing* programs in Quebec (Ducharme and Vaillancourt, 2006; Bouchard and Hudon, 2005: 12). As Marie Bouchard and Marcellin Hudon state, "the parameters of the [*AccèsLogis*] program were discussed and negotiated with the community" (2005: 5).

Social housing with community support is a fourth example of co-production and co-construction. This example clearly illustrates the contribution of the social economy to the co-production of new innovative practices, which often end up opening the way to the emergence of public policy co-produced and co-constructed with input from the social economy. This issue has been closely monitored by LAREPPS since 1995. In a first exhaustive research on the topic, conducted on the practices of the Montreal federation of housing NPOs (*Fédération des OSBL d'habitation de Montréal*, or FOHM), LAREPPS showed that these innovative practices contributed to improving the living conditions of the FOHM's lessees (single people, homeless, with mental health or drug addiction problems, etc.) (Jetté et al, 1998; Thériault et al, 1997 and 2001; FOHM, 1997). LAREPPS emphasized above all that the lack of long-term funding of these practices was a problem, since they constantly depended on local and regional stakeholders' resourcefulness. Consequently, *the LAREPPS researchers recommended, as early as 1998, that the Quebec government adopt a clear, sustainable funding policy for the community support part in social housing practices with community support* for socially and socio-economically vulnerable individuals (Jetté et al, 1998: 198–199). These recommendations were often repeated in subsequent work on residential resource needs for a broader vulnerable clientele, in particular for elderly people experiencing a slight decrease in autonomy and disabled persons (Vaillancourt and Ducharme, 2001; Ducharme and Vaillancourt, 2002; Ducharme, Lalonde and Vaillancourt, 2005; Vaillancourt and Charpentier, 2005; Vaillancourt, 2007a; Proulx et al, 2006: 140–145). They were taken up again by other researchers (Dansereau, 2005: 38–39) and stakeholder groups, in particular the Quebec housing NPO network (*Réseau québécois d'OSBL d'habitation*) (RQOH, 2004 and 2007; Roy, 2007). They were repeated by public agencies concerned, such as the *Société d'habitation du Québec*, municipal housing bureaus and the Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services (*ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*, or MSSS) (MSSS and SHQ, 2007). In November 2007, the Quebec government announced a new

public policy to *institutionalize* funding of the community support component in the social-housing-with-community-support formula (MSSS and SSQ, 2007). This example is striking, but it is not the only one.[22]

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can summarize our thesis by saying that, in social housing as in other areas of practice and policy, the presence of the social economy contributes to a *triple democratization*. In fact, it fosters the democratization both of practices, of policy development (co-construction) and of operationalization of new policy (co-production). The growing presence of stakeholders from the social economy in social housing practices and policy responds to the aspiration of the population groups targeted by these interventions to exercise greater control over their living and housing conditions. The flexibility of the co-operative and association-based formulas leads to innovations, such as the participation of users and citizens in management, targeting of population groups that are marginalized or have special problems (women, Aboriginal communities, disabled persons, homeless, etc.), and reinforcement of the economic, social and political citizenship of certain fringes of society that are especially exposed to exclusion.

We were prompted, based both on literature reviews and on analyses of certain recent social policy reforms, to differentiate clearly between co-production and co-construction of public policy. We have observed that the social economy could participate both in the development and in the application of this public policy. At the same time, we have highlighted the fact that the social economy, depending on the configurations in which it stood, could contribute to the democratization and enhancement of public policy by making it more fair and inclusive in terms of redistribution of wealth and power.

In fact, we have argued in favour of public policy capable of integrating elements of both co-production and co-construction. Co-production is not a rare commodity. Moreover, it can very well exist in policy constructed by a hierarchical, authoritarian state that is used to deciding everything all on its own. For us, there are two issues to which priority should be given.

The *first issue* refers to the importance of legitimizing a form of co-production that calls on the third sector and offers an *alternative to the market co-production* sometimes known as the Welfare Mix or PPP. This form of co-production has long existed in many Northern and Southern societies, as the scientific literature reveals. But in that literature, the dominant current, while sometimes open to the third sector, conveys a neo-liberal and neo-conservative vision of the state which reduces civil society to the private sector and seeks a public administration "influenced by an entrepreneurship in which the government is inspired by meeting the client's needs and not citizens' needs" (Marinez, 2007: 21–22). Fortunately, other writings refer to scenarios that interest us more, that is, to partnership formulas in which the social economy is recognized and supported by the public authorities. Hence the interest we have expressed in the writings of Pestoff (2006) and Cunill (2004), who conceptualized the benefits of partner-type practices between the state and the third sector. These papers put forward alternatives to the privatization and market co-production of the dominant current of New Public Management. They argue in favour of

[22] Among the other public policies on housing that were co-constructed with participation by the social economy and other stakeholders from civil society is the reform, introduced in 2002, of the rules of governance for municipal housing bureaus (*Offices municipaux d'habitation*, or OMH). In fact, among the provisions of Bill 49 amending the *Act respecting the Société d'habitation du Québec*, a number led to formal recognition of the lessees' right of association and encouraged participation by low-income housing lessee association representatives on the municipal housing bureaus' boards of directors (Morin, 2007: 149). The democratization of the form of governance of public social housing institutions stems from the dissemination in the public sector of certain innovations in governance practices previously tested in housing co-operatives and NPOs (Vaillancourt and Charpentier, 2005: chapter 4; Ducharme, 2006).

co-production based on co-operation between the state and the third sector, hypothesizing that this option is more contributory to the democratization of public policy.

The *second issue* concerns the importance of fostering, at least in certain public policy issues, a close bond between co-production and co-construction. In fact, if this bond is not made, is not participation by stakeholders from civil society (including the social economy) likely to remain enclosed in the organizational dimension of public policy while leaving the state responsible for looking after its institutional dimension all on its own? By leaving the state the monopoly on the definition of public policy, are we not depriving ourselves of essential levers for fostering the development of policy that does not ignore the general interest and is open to democratic governance? In our view, a very close conceptual and practical relationship can be established between co-production (of services of public interest and policy), on the one hand, and co-construction (of policy) on the other.

That is why, throughout our paper, we have argued in favour of a theoretical and practical position that valued participation by stakeholders from civil society and the market, without ignoring those from the social economy, not only downstream (at the moment of co-production), but also upstream (at the moment of co-construction) of public policy. We have expressed this position by building on the expertise of our Quebec and Canadian research teams on the social economy and of certain researchers belonging to CIRIEC International, including Lévesque and Thiry (forthcoming in 2008) and Enjolras (2006).

In closing, we acknowledge that in our perusal of the Latin American literature on the democratization of public policy, we did not formally find this distinction between co-production and co-construction of public policy. But it seemed to us that several Latin American researchers, starting from other theoretical avenues, came to this. For instance, the current in the literature pleading in favour of broadening "citizen control" over public policy (Marinez, 2007: 334–335; Garretón, 2007; Cunill, forthcoming in 2008) certainly targets, initially, opportunities for criticizing existing policy, which could have been constructed by the state all on its own. But, along the way, if the critical function becomes effective, is it not on the point of contributing to reshaping the content of public policy and becoming fully involved in its potential reconstruction? That discussion may be worth pursuing.

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