

Three-Dimensional Construction of the Supply-Demand Relationship of Public Cultural Services from the Perspective of New Public Governance: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Public cultural services objectively entail multiple supply-demand relationships; streamlining and optimizing these relationships can enhance the supply-demand effectiveness of public cultural services. [Method/Process] Employing new public governance theory and integrating it with China's practices in public cultural service development, this study undertakes a threefold reconstruction of supply-demand relationships in public cultural services, specifically the reconstruction of supply-demand subject relationships, value relationships, and interface relationships. [Results/Conclusion] The threefold reconstruction of supply-demand relationships primarily serves to optimize public cultural services, exhibits a hierarchical progression in its structural configuration, adheres to a service-dominant logic in its internal rationale, and adopts collaborative governance as its fundamental tenet.

Full Text

Preamble

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The Triple Construction of Supply-Demand Relationships in Public Cultural Services from the Perspective of New Public Governance

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Public cultural services objectively involve multiple supply-demand relationships. Clarifying and optimizing these relationships can enhance the effectiveness of supply-demand alignment in public cultural services. **[Method/Process]** This paper employs new public governance theory combined with China's public cultural service construction practices to develop a triple construction of supply-demand relationships: the construction of subject relationships, value relationships, and docking relationships. **[Result/Conclusion]** The triple construction primarily functions to optimize public cultural services, features a hierarchical and progressive structural relationship, follows a service-dominant logic, and adheres to joint governance as its fundamental principle.

Keywords: public cultural services; supply-demand relationship; triple construction; new public governance

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Meeting public cultural needs is the starting point and ultimate goal of public cultural services. In January 2015, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the *Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a Modern Public Cultural Service System*, proposing that public cultural service system construction should aim to satisfy people's basic public cultural needs. The *Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People's Republic of China*, passed in December 2016, similarly stipulates in legislative form that public cultural services should primarily aim to meet citizens' basic cultural needs. However, in public cultural service practice, particularly in some public cultural service projects, phenomena of supply-demand imbalance and even disconnection persist, becoming a crux affecting service effectiveness. This paper explores the reconstruction of subject, value, and docking relationships in public cultural service supply-demand from the perspective of new public governance, hoping to promote service effectiveness and provide theoretical support for building China's modern public cultural service system.

Globally, new public governance has become an important theoretical framework and action guide for understanding, evaluating, and guiding future public service delivery. Osborne conceptualizes new public governance as a third "regime" for understanding public policy implementation and public service provision, beyond traditional public administration and new public management, because it captures the 21st-century reality of public policy execution and service delivery within multi-organizational and pluralistic complexity [1]. The theoretical core of new public governance is the "public service-dominant logic" (PSDL), which emphasizes the intangibility of services, the simultaneity of production and consumption, and the characteristic that service users are also co-producers. The co-production concept creatively transforms service users into service providers, changing the nature of services through role transformation. This represents

not only a distinctive feature of public service provision under new public governance but also a concrete means to achieve it.

1. Theoretical Origins and Research Status

1.1 New Public Governance Theory

Discussions on public cultural service supply-demand relationships require an appropriate theoretical lens, and new public governance represents the latest and most suitable perspective both domestically and internationally. The term “new public governance” was first formally proposed in 2006 by Professor Stephen P. Osborne of the University of Edinburgh. As a new public management paradigm established in the early 21st century, new public governance has been regarded worldwide as an important theoretical framework for understanding, evaluating, and guiding future public service provision. Its theoretical core, the public service-dominant logic, emphasizes service intangibility, the simultaneity of production and consumption, and the co-producer role of service users. The co-production concept creatively transforms service users into service providers, fundamentally altering service nature through role transformation—this constitutes both a hallmark feature and implementation pathway of new public governance.

1.2 Domestic Research Review

Domestic scholars have primarily developed two research strands on public cultural services: supply and demand. Demand-side research focuses on needs assessment, expression, feedback, and differentiation, while supply-side research has accumulated substantial findings on provision levels, models, mechanisms, and efficiency. Studies integrating both supply and demand mostly analyze coupling and congruence to explore service effectiveness. For instance, Xu Shuangmin and Song Yuanwu [2] found through empirical research that “rural public cultural service supply and demand exhibit a certain degree of mismatch.” Weng Lie’en et al. [3] constructed a community public cultural service supply-demand matching model for performance evaluation. Ma Xuesong [4] and Yang Lin [5] identified supply-demand matching as a fundamental characteristic of effective public cultural service provision. These studies primarily examine whether supply meets demand and the resulting service effectiveness, yet lack systematic investigation of supply-demand relationships and their multiplicity—precisely the core issue of public cultural service systems.

Moreover, few domestic studies apply new public governance theory specifically to China’s public cultural services, with most remaining at the theoretical interpretation stage. Notable exceptions include Bao Guoxian et al. [6], who introduced new public governance into Chinese public service performance evaluation, and Wei Bin et al. [7], who analyzed third-sector employment services under this framework. Overall, Chinese academic research on new public governance concentrates on theoretical introduction, with weak guidance for public

cultural services and scarce studies on typical practices, particularly lacking theoretical examination of supply-demand relationships.

New public governance theory emphasizes that the public service process involves interaction between service organizations and users at service delivery nodes. This process highlights users' experiences and knowledge as vital resources for effective service design and provision, focusing on inter-organizational relationships and process governance [8]. The "relationships" emphasized in new public governance refer to the multiple actual relationships between supply and demand, primarily including subject relationships, value relationships, and docking relationships throughout the supply-demand process.

2. Subject Relationship Construction: Supply-Demand Subject Isomorphism

Among the multiple relationships in public cultural services, the subject relationship constitutes the fundamental relationship. Its direct and explicit impact on supply-demand relationships determines the quality of other relationships.

2.1 The "Absence" Phenomenon in Supply-Demand Subject Relationships

Public cultural services cannot exist without providers and demanders—a seemingly unproblematic premise. Yet in practice, demanders are often "absent" or "not in position," causing supply-demand imbalances. Take China's Rural Library Project, one of five major cultural initiatives benefiting the people. By August 2012, China achieved its construction goal three years ahead of schedule, establishing 600,449 standard rural libraries nationwide. By April 2015, central government investment exceeded 20 billion yuan. However, due to varying internal and external environments, these libraries developed unevenly. While advanced cases like Youxian County's "Five Yellow Eggs" model emerged, many rural libraries faced cold reception—a more widespread phenomenon. Numerous studies and observations reveal that post-construction rural libraries suffer from extremely low utilization rates, with many becoming "deserted" or mere "book warehouses." This indicates that further development cannot simply pursue coverage rates and hardware levels but must emphasize suitability between library services and rural residents' needs [9]. Similar situations occur to varying degrees in other cultural service activities. For example, some cultural performances in rural areas feature more old operas than new ones with unattractive programs, while others blindly replicate urban lifestyles by developing museums and small theaters that severely deviate from rural realities. Numerous cultural festivals and corridors have become image projects far removed from genuine public cultural demands.

These phenomena reflect supply-demand imbalance, but the underlying cause lies in the "absence" of supply-demand subjects: (1) Demanders are "not present"—some rural libraries have rooms and books but no readers, rendering

book services objectless and making it impossible to achieve the goal of meeting public cultural needs. (2) Demanders are “not in position”—some citizens abandon or partially relinquish their right to cultural services, let alone participate in them. (3) Providers are “negligent”—some grassroots governments fail to fulfill their responsibilities as cultural service providers, restricting service functionality through management methods and institutional design.

This “absence” phenomenon reflects asymmetric relationships between supply-demand subjects, primarily caused by the dominant position of some grassroots governments in cultural services. On one hand, governments “subjectively assume that supplied public cultural services are what the public demands” [10]; on the other hand, governments monopolize cultural service supply without market competition, resulting in monotonous forms and low-quality services.

2.2 Theoretical Interpretation of Supply-Demand Subject Relationships

Eliminating subject absence requires reconstructing the unequal relationship between supply-demand parties. New public governance’s “co-production” concept offers a fresh analytical perspective. Co-production, also termed collaborative or joint production, represents a way for government and citizens to synergize their efforts [11]. V. A. Pestoff argues that “co-production is the core concept of new public governance, referring to better citizen participation and third-sector provision in public services” [12], with this “citizen production” based on voluntary individual or group efforts to improve service quality or quantity [13]. Governance comprises activities organized and conducted by citizens or organizations with common goals, regardless of formal authorization, making co-production a crucial pathway to new public governance.

The essence of public service co-production lies in public-private sectors integrating national, social, corporate, and citizen resources and strengths based on civic participation spirit to provide superior public services [14]. Under this model, government’s role extends beyond responding to demands to developing citizens as co-producers, while citizens transform from simple demand expressers, service consumers, and evaluators into service creators [15]. Fundamentally, co-production is not an “add-on” to services but an inseparable component and core content of public service provision, as well as the source of performance and innovation [16]. Its greatest value lies in recognizing that citizens (service users) should personally participate in producing needed services and share responsibility for quality, leaving ample space for voice expression and democratic growth.

Co-production can fully leverage demand subjects’ role in public cultural services, making them not merely present but actively engaged. Therefore, governments should incorporate citizens into the co-producer camp, while citizens should shift from “customer” or “consumer” postures to actively participate in

public cultural service production and take responsibility for quality improvement. This concept provides opportunities to enhance suitability between public cultural services and citizen needs while embedding theoretical foundations for reconstructing supply-demand subject relationships.

2.3 Construction of Supply-Demand Subject Relationships

Drawing on new public governance's co-production concept, we can construct the fundamental relationship of public cultural service supply-demand subjects: "supply-demand subject isomorphism." This isomorphism primarily involves transforming cultural service demand subjects into service providers equal in status to supply subjects. This process involves three dimensions: participating subjects, content, and methods (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]), with the construction and interaction state of these three aspects forming the force determining public cultural service effectiveness.

Figure 1. "Supply-Demand Subject Isomorphism" Relationship in Public Cultural Services

At the participating subject level, isomorphism requires both supply and demand subjects to be "in position." Governments, especially grassroots governments, serve as "regular producers" of public services, while the public acts as special "consumer-producers." Both parties must break the supplier-recipient dichotomy, assign the public new role status, and form a co-production covenant to generate, develop, and complete effective public cultural services.

At the content level, subject interaction revolves around cultural facilities, activities, products, and services. Governments should adhere to principles of public welfare, guidance, and support, actively responding to public cultural needs and placing demanders at the core of services. As cultural service demanders, the public holds dual identities as customers, consumers, producers, and providers, completing public cultural service supply alongside government through participation while expanding their role positioning and increasing cultural empowerment.

At the method level, both parties adopt different participation methods according to different service content. For cultural facilities, activities, products, and services, governments primarily provide, organize, and purchase, while the public mainly utilizes, participates in, and consumes them.

Beyond redefining both parties' roles, "supply-demand subject isomorphism" reveals a potential structural tension arising from the initiative held by both supply and demand sides. When orderly interaction occurs, synergy emerges and service goals become achievable; when absence or lack of response and feedback occurs, this tension becomes resistance to public cultural services. Therefore, demand orientation in public cultural services is fundamentally a value orientation. Aligning with this orientation and jointly providing basic public cultural services enables the formation of a long-term supply guarantee mechanism.

3. Value Relationship Construction: Supply-Demand Value Co-creation

Another relationship in public cultural service supply-demand is the non-explicit but dominant value relationship between subjects—an implicit internal relationship revealing the formation motivation of subject relationships.

3.1 Value Deviation Issues in Service Supply-Demand

In practice, supply subjects and the public sometimes exhibit value preferences regarding public cultural service values. While normal, excessive gaps directly or indirectly affect service effectiveness.

On one hand, governments are conventional public cultural service providers, with grassroots governments as direct drivers. Under China's pressure-based administrative system, grassroots governments and officials face quantified assessment pressures, leading them to unconsciously emphasize quantitative indicators like basic service facilities and even use public cultural services as tools for political achievement and image projects. This technical governance path deviates from the state's value orientation for developing public cultural services. On the other hand, while market entities are advocated as playing a principal role in resource allocation, their efficiency and economic interest orientation leads them to prioritize profits over public welfare and efficiency over effectiveness in public cultural service provision. Additionally, social organizations have begun playing certain roles in China's public cultural service provision, but their weak development and government dependence prevent them from presenting fully independent, non-profit, non-governmental images. Some even engage in profit-making activities with arbitrary charges, lacking social credibility [17].

In rural library construction, excessive value deviation between supply subjects and the public has caused problems: emphasizing quantity over quality, hardware over software, indicators over effects, construction over management, and short-term effects over long-term guarantees. As scholars note, "From formal quantitative indicators, local governments have completed rural library construction tasks well, basically meeting assessment standards. However, regarding substantive impact or effects on rural areas and farmers, the picture is quite different" [18].

3.2 Relevant Theories on Supply-Demand Value Relationships

New public governance's service-dominant logic provides insights for reconstructing value relationships. As the core of "new public governance," service-dominant theory and methodology center public policy implementation and service provision, reinterpreting Western public service processes characterized by multi-organization and pluralism from the service provider rather than producer perspective (the starting point of traditional public management theory) [19].

Service-dominant logic builds upon critique of “product-dominant logic,” which treats public services merely as products or commodities, emphasizing performance-oriented efficiency over external benefits meeting social and economic needs [1]. This 注定 cannot form a sustainable public service supply mechanism and inevitably incurs high transaction costs. Service-dominant logic, however, emphasizes that public service essence is “service” rather than manufactured goods. Most “public products” (whether provided by government, third sector, or private sector) are in fact public services [19]. This theory integrates traditional service theory about service intangibility, simultaneous production-consumption, and co-production (users as both producers and consumers). Table 1 contrasts product-dominant and service-dominant logic.

Table 1. Comparison Between Product-Dominant Logic and Service-Dominant Logic

Product-Dominant Logic	Service-Dominant Logic
Traditional Public Management Theory	New Public Governance Theory
Technical Rationality (Internal Efficiency)	Value Rationality (Publicness and External Benefits)
Tangible, Separate Production-Consumption	Intangible, Simultaneous Production-Consumption, Co-production
User as Purchaser/Consumer	User as Co-producer

The dominant element in both logics is value pursuit. Product-dominant logic, governed by technical rationality, prioritizes internal public organization efficiency. Service-dominant logic, governed by value rationality, prioritizes external publicness and social benefits. These different value pursuits lead one to focus on product provision and measure effectiveness by output, while the other centers on service and aims for social welfare effects.

3.3 Construction of Supply-Demand Value Relationships

“Supply-demand subject isomorphism” requires both parties to share common or similar service values. Since different subjects’ value preferences objectively exist, value relationships—defined as connections between value subjects and objects [20]—must be constructed. New public governance’s service-dominant logic creates opportunities for government and public value co-creation. Both should reconstruct new value relationships through interactive value processes to achieve “supply-demand value co-creation.”

- (1) Government must clarify the subject of value relationships in public cultural services. As a relational category, value represents specific connections between value subjects and objects [20]. In public cultural service value relationships, who is subject and who is object? According

to service-dominant logic, the public constitutes the value relationship subject. Therefore, governments must genuinely center on public service needs, enhancing their ability to “understand citizens’ and users’ current and future needs and expectations,” and emphasizing public participation and satisfaction. In this process, government transforms from service leader to collaborator, assistant, and supporter, creating conditions for the public to contribute cultural value and achieving cultural governance goals.

- (2) The public must play the subject role in supply-demand value relationships. As service users, the public are also value producers and creators. However, in public cultural services, most citizens, especially rural residents, exhibit selective consumption or abandonment due to knowledge levels and value 观念 differences, showing insufficient sensitivity to fulfilling their cultural needs and rights. This neither helps realize their cultural interests nor affects value synthesis in public cultural services. Therefore, the public should gradually develop cultural rights awareness, fully utilize government-provided platforms and interfaces, participate as production collaborators in service processes, obtain their cultural rights, and realize cultural value.
- (3) Supply-demand value relationships must be established through service processes. Norman [21] identifies “moments of truth” when service users and organization staff interact—moments where service supply-demand value co-creation is achieved through coordinated, mutually influential dialogue and interaction. In such interactions, supply subjects enter the public’s service value creation stage, actively creating opportunities for public value creation. Since service value is created during user consumption and supply subjects influence this usage and value creation process, they also participate in public value creation. Through such interaction, the public and government achieve not only value co-creation but also value sharing.

4. Docking Relationship Construction: Supply-Demand Joint Governance

The triple relationships in public cultural services must ultimately materialize in supply-demand docking relationships. The purpose of subject “isomorphism” and the realization of value “co-creation” must be reflected in docking relationships.

4.1 Practical Explorations in Public Cultural Service Supply-Demand Docking

Supply-demand docking constitutes crucial content in building modern public cultural service systems. To achieve the basic goal of meeting public cultural needs, the Ministry of Culture and other ministries issued the *Opinions on Do-*

ing a Good Job in Government Purchase of Public Cultural Services from Social Forces in May 2015, proposing to establish a “bottom-up, demand-determined supply” interactive, menu-style service approach to promote effective docking between supply and public cultural demand. Consequently, supply-demand docking has become core to modern public cultural service system construction. Fujian, Shanghai, Gansu, Qingdao, and other provincial and municipal governments have formulated implementation opinions on strengthening supply-demand docking, providing specific guidance and standardization for local public cultural service activities.

Localities have actively explored supply-demand docking, with four typical cases: (1) **Qingdao Chengyang District’s “Cultural Supermarket” model**: Since 2010, each community has employed full-time cultural administrators who distribute surveys to residents and aggregate preferences. With this information, the government designs different products for youth, middle-aged, and elderly groups—such as opera, variety shows, and children’s plays—and procures them from professional groups. (2) **Zhejiang Jiaxing’s “Cultural Appointment” project**: In 2013, Jiaxing integrated municipal cultural resources to establish an “Internet+” one-stop service platform, packaging public cultural resources into projects for public appointment, supervision, and evaluation, enhancing participation. (3) **Shanghai’s new cultural distribution model**: In 2014, Shanghai Oriental Public Cultural Distribution Center assumed municipal distribution responsibilities, providing performances, guidance, lectures, and art education activities to over 200 community cultural activity centers, allowing citizens to “sample dishes” before “ordering online.” (4) **Shandong Zhucheng’s library “one-card” service model**: Since 2009, Zhucheng has networked town libraries and rural libraries through a cluster management system, enabling unified procurement, cataloging, and distribution. All 235 rural libraries implemented an interlibrary loan system, facilitating rural residents’ reading choices and borrowing.

These cases demonstrate that local explorations can somewhat alleviate supply-demand imbalances, forming distinctive features and achieving certain results. However, these remain “point” explorations with regional and unstable characteristics. China still lacks universal “surface” promotion of effective supply-demand docking, let alone stable, typical, and replicable mature models. The widespread “book supply-demand mismatch” phenomenon in rural libraries warrants serious attention.

4.2 Theoretical Implications of Supply-Demand Docking Relationships

Supply-demand docking relationships refer to relationships generated between supply and demand parties during public cultural service processes, closely connected with service provision and demand. Such process relationships constitute the essence of governance emphasized by new public governance theory, which “focuses largely on relationships between different organizations and on process

governance” [22]. Although new public governance theory does not specifically discuss service supply-demand docking and relationships, its process and relationship governance offers insights for reconstructing China’s public cultural service supply-demand docking relationships:

- (1) Docking relationships are inter-subject relationships manifesting as relationships between service providers and users. Public cultural services aim to deliver tangible benefits to demanders and guarantee cultural rights, with effectiveness ultimately evaluated by demanders.
- (2) Docking relationships are also multi-organizational relationships, where social organizations serve as undertakers of government-purchased public cultural services, representing socialization and marketization of public cultural services and organizational guarantees for meeting diverse public cultural needs.
- (3) Docking relationships reflect supply-demand interaction, including platforms, content, methods, and mechanisms, indicating that docking involves not only content but also essential elements like platforms.

4.3 Construction of Supply-Demand Docking Relationships

Based on new public governance theory and China’s public cultural service docking governance practices, we can construct public cultural service supply-demand docking relationships as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper].

Figure 2. “Supply-Demand Joint Governance” in Public Cultural Services

Supply-demand docking relationships comprise two element categories: subject elements and process elements.

Subject elements include government, market, social organizations, and the public, reflecting “joint governance” interactions: (1) **Government supply diversification**: As supply and responsible subjects in docking relationships, governments must diversify supply content and methods, enabling public choice by delegating to markets or purchasing from social organizations to provide rich cultural products and services. (2) **Undertaking by public cultural institutions, market entities, and social organizations**: Public cultural institutions (libraries, museums, cultural centers) remain important service undertakers whose status cannot be ignored. Market entities can compensate for government failure and enhance docking quality. Social organizations (professional art groups, non-profit cultural institutions, industry associations, professional colleges) undertake and implement government public cultural service projects. (3) **Public demand categorization**: Public demand is complex, with citizens of different ages, occupations, and social backgrounds having vastly different needs and subjective feelings. Categorizing public demand can better mobilize public participation in docking processes.

Process elements involve content and methods as concrete “joint governance” manifestations: (1) **Precise docking content**: Governments must accurately understand public cultural needs, develop supply catalogs, and push truly needed services to the public. (2) **Extended docking platforms**: Continuously update cultural service facilities with specialization and mobility, maximizing multifunctional facility utilization. (3) **Diversified docking methods**: Implement “menu-style” and “à la carte” approaches, developing new docking methods linking experts with masses and organizations with masses. (4) **Systematized docking mechanisms**: Establish and improve mechanisms for collecting, applying, disclosing, and evaluating public cultural needs information.

Conclusion

In summary, applying new public governance theories of co-production, service-dominance, and process/relationship governance to China’s public cultural service problems and exploratory practices enables a triple construction of supply-demand relationships—subject, value, and docking relationships—yielding several conclusions:

- (1) The triple construction constitutes an important component of modern public cultural service systems. Modern public cultural service systems mainly comprise policies, infrastructure, supply and demand subjects, activity methods, and budgets, with supply and demand subjects being the core elements. Therefore, exploring the triple construction facilitates modern public cultural service system development.
- (2) Hierarchical and progressive structural relationships exist among the triple constructions. The subject relationship is fundamental, demonstrating the basic structure of supply-demand subject isomorphism. The value relationship is internal, reflecting the formation motivation of this structure. The docking relationship is operational, reflecting structural tension. This remains primarily a theoretical construction whose actual structural tension effects require further verification in practice.
- (3) The internal logic of the triple construction is service-dominant logic, determining the service-served relationship between subjects, the publicness and social benefit in value relationships, and the demand-determined supply in docking relationships. Service-dominant logic is both the theoretical logic of the triple construction and the practical logic that current public cultural service operations should follow.
- (4) The fundamental principle of the triple construction is joint governance, including subject relationship “isomorphism,” value relationship “co-creation,” and docking relationship “joint governance.” Joint governance by supply-demand parties represents both the current focus and future development trend of China’s public cultural services.

However, the triple construction research requires increased dynamic investigation. As people's cultural service needs continuously change with economic and social development, cultural service supply-demand development always follows the basic pattern from imbalance to relative balance to new imbalance. Therefore, research on the dynamic balance of supply-demand relationships is necessary. Due to space limitations, this issue will be explored in future research.

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Author Contributions

Chunyu Miaoling: Designed article framework and structure, revised and finalized manuscript;

Li Chunyan: Collected materials, drafted initial manuscript;

Lan Qingqing: Collected literature, refined and improved article.

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] Public cultural services have multiple relationships in supply and demand. Simplifying and optimizing these relationships can improve the effectiveness of supply and demand of public cultural services. [Method/process] Thus, this paper applies the new public governance theory combined with the practice of public cultural service construction in China for developing the supply and demand relationship of public cultural services in triple dimensions, including the reconstruction of the relationship, the value relationship and the docking relationship between suppliers and demanders.

[Result/conclusion] The main function of the three reconstruction structure of supply and demand is to optimize public cultural services, and the structural relationship is hierarchical and progressive, the internal logic is service-oriented logic, and the basic main line is joint governance.

Keywords: public cultural service; supply and demand relationship; triple construction; new public governance

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