

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: CONTRIBUTIONS TO A MULTIFACETED FIELD OF RESEARCH

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EDITORIAL

Over the last quarter century, collaboration, co-production and participation have become major topics in public management, partnership working and governance research. Academics in many developed and developing countries seem to have joined forces in international scholarly networks – such as the International Public Management Network (IPMN) – where collaborative, co-productive or participatory arrangements are the focus of research. This should not come as a surprise, as the rising complexity of social systems, coupled with a persistent criticism of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of public sector organisations, have made various forms of joint action in policymaking and public service delivery increasingly important around the globe (Kekez, Howlett & Ramesh 2018). It is increasingly apparent that collaboration among different stakeholders is required to deal with the complex reality of today's societies (Christensen & Læg Reid 2011). Joint action is not only needed to improve public service provision, but to create capabilities of solving some of our most pressing challenges (e.g. climate change, poverty, disparities, vulnerabilities and pandemics), which cannot be tackled by public sector organisations alone (Eriksson et al. 2019, Addidle and Liddle, 2020).

Analytical and normative theories and concepts of collaboration come in a great variety of shapes and sizes. They are labelled differently, such as *post-NPM* (Christensen 2012), *collaborative public management* (Eriksson et al. 2019), *new public* (Osborne 2006) or *collaborative governance* (Ansell & Gash 2008), *co-production* and *co-creation* (Brandson & Pestoff 2006; Bovaird & Loeffler 2012), *citizen engagement* or *participation* (Irvin and Stansbury 2004), *collaborative administration* (Cristofoli, Meneguzzo & Riccucci 2017) as well as the *joint production of public goods and commons* (cf. research program of the International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy (CIRIEC)).¹ However, all these concepts have in common, that they describe the idea of collective processes of decision-making and public service provision by state, market, and civil society actors (Kekez, Howlett and Ramesh 2018).

The international literature on these themes are flourishing. With a unique set of comparative analyses and manifold case studies from different countries (Loeffler 2021; Loeffler & Bovaird 2021; Brandsen, Steen & Verschuere 2018), scholarly literature covers many facets in public management and governance research (Sørensen & Torfing 2011; Kekez, Howlett & Ramesh 2019). According to the idea of the IPMN – “to provide a forum for sharing ideas, concepts and results of research and practice in the field of public management, and to stimulate critical thinking about alternative approaches to problem solving and decision making in the public sector”² – we contribute to this multifaceted landscape.

All the papers included in this issue stimulate a dialogue on collaborative governance, and develop knowledge on how to make partnerships between state and non-state actors succeed.

The first article of this issue, written by Tony Kinder, Frédérique Six, Jari Stenvall, Antti Talonen and Ally Memon, looks at emerging governance systems from different conceptual lenses. Linking with the debate around NPM and new public governance, the article studies different conceptual approaches for explaining changing systems that locally deliver integrated health and social care. In doing so, the authors analyse three health and social care ecosystems, namely London, Tampere, and West Lothian in Scotland. It is argued (1) that network analysis is suited to NPM, rather than new public governance; (2) that classifying service systems as networks or ecosystems has important strategic and management implications; and (3) that these distinctions are misunderstood in practice.

In the second article, Muh Azis Muslim, Eko Prasojito and Roy V. Salomo investigate the role of leadership in collaborative governance. The study provides a precise analysis of five leadership typologies exemplified by the regents of Kulon Progo and Banyuwangi in Indonesia. The results show that leadership have a tendency to display similarities in typologies, dominated by entrepreneurial, network governance, and transformational leadership. With regard to the two regents, the transactional and interpersonal facets of leadership have the lowest average value, while the predominant characteristics give indication to aspects such as initiating, being visionaries, showing commitment to colleagues and organisations, and being problem oriented.

In the third article devoted to collaborative innovation in Canada, Margaret Bancercz explores agroecosystem living labs as new collaborative innovation approaches. The main research question concerns how these living labs can help to understand more about co-production processes? By using semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the paper gathered early-stage insights from various living lab partners in two Canadian agroecosystem living lab sites. The paper concludes that starting conditions of partners are informative in the initial stages of living lab implementation. Three lessons are identified: (1) meta-governance is essential to a well-functioning agroecosystem living lab; (2) it is useful to regularly reflect on power balances within the living lab; moreover, closer self-reflection by the meta-governor is important; (3) social iteration is a useful “check-in” tool to use in addition to any other innovation iterations.

In the concluding article, Vinitha M. Siebers, Gerda M. van Dijk and Rob van Eijbergen take a comparative look at local citizen engagement. The authors state that citizen engagement in theory and practice is characterised by strong variety and diversity, which leads to inconsistencies and unproductive debates among those who organise it. In addition, empirical research on how municipalities develop citizen engagement is limited.

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Therefore, the article aims at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by exploring dominant patterns in the way municipalities organise citizen engagement, the role of those involved and practices that emerge. The paper builds on cases in four Dutch municipalities, one Danish and one South African municipality. In practice, citizen engagement comes with a complex dynamic. Organising citizen engagement affects the entire municipality. It can be seen as an intervention in the municipal organisation and those involved.

NOTES

- ¹ <http://www.ciriec.uliege.be/en/research/transversal-working-group/transversal-themes/joint-production-and-co-production-of-public-goods-and-commons/>.
- ² <https://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>.

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