

Call for papers for Public Management Review special issue on *Accountability and Legitimacy in Collaborative Governance*

Guest editors

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Background

Over the last few decades, public administrations and managers have been under an extreme pressure to handle ever more complex societal problems with dwindling resources. One of the promising responses to this double challenge has been collaborative governance. Variouslly dubbed interactive governance, co-creation, participatory governance, network governance or even new public governance, governments and many scholars have proposed collaborative forms as a means to unearth the resources of public and private actors in policymaking and in the design and production of public services (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Warren, 2009; Torfing & Triantafyllou, 2011; Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015). By including the knowledge of experts and relevant and affected actors in the design of policies, and by mobilizing the local experiences, needs and energies of frontline workers and citizens in the co-production of services, collaborative governance may enhance motivation among civil servants and produce more value for money for citizens (Bennington & Moore, 2011). Accordingly, a number of studies have examined the effectiveness of collaborative governance (Provan & Kenis, 2007; Torfing, Peters, Pierre, & Sørensen, 2012, pp. 166–185).

However, collaborative governance is not only about effectiveness. It is also about democracy and legitimacy (Warren, 2009). A number of scholars have addressed the twin problems of accountability and legitimacy of collaborative governance. However, the literature on the implications of collaborative governance for accountability and legitimacy is somewhat bewildering. On the one hand, many studies stress the risks linked to collaborative governance, such as the absence of clear rules and guidelines for the decision-making processes, insufficient or even lacking transparency (Torfing et al., 2012, pp. 208–228), biased and unequal patterns of participation (Beaumont, 2003), vague lines of responsibility and sanctioning (Esmark, 2007, pp. 290–295), etc.. Thus, the collaborative and often informal nature of collaborative governance may lead to insufficient accountability and, ultimately, to dwindling legitimacy (Papadopoulos, 2007). Finally, a few studies point out that collaborative governance is by default imbued with power relations which at times may negatively influence the accountability and legitimacy (Huxham, Vangen, Huxham, & Eden, 2000; Willems & Van Dooren, 2011; Purdy, 2012).

On the other hand, some studies claim that the collaborative and informal nature of collaborative governance may actually enhance its legitimacy because it includes affected actors in the design process and better addresses the needs of citizens (Fung & Wright, 2003; Fawcett & Daugbjerg, 2012; Orr, Adamowski, Medema, & Milot, 2016). To this last group of scholars, collaborative governance may not be well equipped to serve accountability, but this may be a justifiable trade-off in the quest for enhancing legitimacy. In brief, the existing literature disagrees both on the consequences of collaborative governance for legitimacy, and on the relationship between accountability and legitimacy. While part of this disagreement may have to do with insufficient empirical studies of the consequences of collaborative governance, another part seems to have to do with the – frequently implicit – adoption of different conceptual references and normative yardsticks for gauging accountability and legitimacy.

Aims

If the implications of collaborative governance to accountability and legitimacy are not better understood and eventually managed in an appropriate way, it may end up as a petty appendix to other forms of public management. In other words, there is a risk that collaborative governance confines itself to minor (inter-) organization problems major, and leaves the handling of societal challenges like climate change and economic inequality to traditional hierarchical steering and market style solutions (Triantafillou, 2019).

Therefore, the aim of this special issue is, firstly, to improve our *conceptual and theoretical* understanding of the relationships between collaborative governance, accountability and legitimacy. The point here is to better understand both the implications of collaborative governance for accountability and legitimacy, and the relationship between the two latter under conditions of collaboration. An important part of this task is to distinguish between different designs or modes of collaborative governance, such as meta-governance and co-production, to understand how such differential designs may impinge differently on accountability and legitimacy. Thus, a few of the special issue papers should systematically map and explicate the most important conceptualizations of accountability and legitimacy within the context of collaborative governance, and expose the theoretical approaches underpinning these conceptions.

The development of a comprehensive conceptual framework for analyzing collaborative governance may bring us closer to understanding its implications for accountability and legitimacy. Thus, the second aim is to *discuss existing and propose new ways of assessing* the accountability and legitimacy of various forms of collaborative governance. In this assessment of collaborative governance, the special issue will also seek to address how shifting and unequal power relations will impinge on accountability and legitimacy. This aim entails reflecting on the dimensions of accountability and legitimacy that such methods and tools render susceptible and which they do not. Thus, some of the papers of the special issues should focus on more specific conceptualizations and assessments of accountability and legitimacy respectively.

The third and final aim of the special issue is to *illustrate how various designs and forms of collaborative governance in practice interrelate with various types of accountability and legitimacy*. While the aim above all is to examine the effects of collaborative governance, the studies should also pay attention to the ways in which concerns over accountability and legitimacy may, in turn, shape the design and modality of collaboration. Thus, we call for papers that examine legal, political, administrative and stakeholder types of accountability, and their effect or input, throughput and output legitimacy. The papers' examination should be supported by one or more concrete cases fleshing out the various types of accountability and legitimacy at stake. In doing so, they must pay attention to how the exercise of specific forms of power form part of these interrelationships. If relevant, the studies should point out how ICT solutions work in support of or to the detriment of ensuring the accountability of the collaboration cases examined.

Special issue process

The special issue is dedicated to be inclusive, impartial and transparent in order to attract the best possible papers. All papers will reviewed by two independent, external referees.

Paper contributors are encouraged to participate in two conference panels/workshops on accountability and legitimacy in collaborative government:

April 2020: Panel at IRSPM, Tampere University, Finland

June 2020: Workshop at the TAD Conference, Roskilde University, Denmark

15th July 2020: DEADLINE for submission of article ms to PMR special issue guest editors

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