

CROSS-SECTORAL RELATIONS IN
THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC
SERVICES

STUDIES IN PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT GOVERNANCE

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CROSS-SECTORAL RELATIONS IN THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

The journey from traditional Public Administration structures to relational and open models of Public Governance has been widely discussed in public management literature, albeit this path has proven to be erratic and largely context dependent in most national systems. In this process, New Public Management, as an ideological and managerial movement, demonstrated merits in opening up the “black box” of administrative processes, yet at the same time took a great deal of (unintended) credit in making clear how much of the potential for organizational change and value creation fundamentally lies at the interfaces between the public sector and its societal counterparts.

Ever since Barry Bozeman’s (1987) *publicness continuum* contribution was offered, providing a framework for public entities in typifying key actors outside their own organizational boundaries, literature and practice on government have both seen an exponential growth of interest towards collaboration across societal sectors. Such collaborative arrangements, it has been argued, lie at the heart of a transformation of administrative systems into policy communities and networks, in what has been labelled as the New Public Governance model (Osborne, 2006). Most importantly, these arrangements have been seen as both a reaction to public service retrenchment and cutback in the face of fiscal crises, and as the imperative approach to deal with interdependent, rapidly evolving (or “wicked”) global problems, to which government centric responses are ill-equipped. Theoretical underpinnings of these approaches inevitably clashed, to an extent, with the realities of the implementation of cross-sectoral collaborations in different national contexts, featuring significant differences in administrative traditions and societal structures. After all, Bryson et al. (2006) had warned that collaboration usually only happens where single-sectoral solutions have been recognized to be failing, and how it is not to be considered an overall panacea.

As such, still too little is known about managerial and inter-organizational drivers facilitating collaborations to effectively overcome these failures. Either in government – non-profit, government – business and government – citizen relations, further empirical evidence is needed to deepen our understanding of how partnerships should be established, strategies should be defined and evaluated, and outcomes should be measured.

This series volume aims at contributing to this discussion and it is organized in two issues. The second issue will feature an intra-organizational approach –

investigating hybrid structures and state-owned enterprises, when partnerships are internalized to some extent into the institutional perimeter of the public actor. The present issue, instead, presents and discusses evidence on collaboration between government, businesses and non-profits, focusing on an inter-organizational perspective of managing at the boundaries between sectors.

The two opening chapters contribute to the debate with a theoretical perspective.

The first chapter “Refocusing Performance Management through Public Service Design?” by Lewandowski addresses the performance management stream of literature, by highlighting the challenges that measuring and managing performance encounters when adopting a co-creation and co-production perspective in public governance. By focusing on the public service design approach, the author links two key strands of the literature which have so far not been dialoguing enough, underlining critical aspects of contemporary performance management models and indications for perspective research.

In the chapter “An Integrated Framework toward Public System Governance: Insights from Viable Systems Approach,” a systemic perspective on the assessment of public governance initiatives is offered. Authors Polese, Troisi, Carrubbo, and Grimaldi bridge VSA and Public Value theory to formulate an integrated perspective on governance, also in this case by means of service design tools.

The following chapter by Gianecchini, Scapolan, Mizzau, and Montanari opens up a cluster of three contributions with an empirical, horizontal focus on different national contexts and collaboration phenomena. Their chapter “Public Support and Corporate Giving to the Arts and Culture in Times of Economic Crisis: An Exploratory Analysis on the Italian Case” features a corporate-centred analysis and empirically develops a typology of business support to cultural and artistic initiatives in the case of Italy. The authors also provide evidence about the characteristics of supporting organizations to different kinds of cultural initiatives, thus offering grounds to identify drivers for this specific type of relation.

Vuori, Kylänen, and Mikkonen draw on large-scale survey data from two countries in the chapter “Working Citizens’ Cross-Sectoral Preferences in England and Finland.” Focusing on the healthcare sector, the authors investigate employees’ and citizens’ preference on public, private or non-profit delivered services, discovering asymmetric and to some extent counter-intuitive preferences and discussing the role of citizens’ innovation in public services.

In the chapter “Government–Third Sector Relations and the Triple Helix Approach: Patterns in the Italian Social Innovation Ecosystem,” Bonomi Savignon and Corvo analyze survey data from a cluster of Italian third sector organizations to investigate the extent and nature of their relations with government and business. They show how contracting-out of services from public sector organizations still dominates the context and systemic collaboration

across sectors is still underrepresented, offering policy and research implications.

The following chapter by Mendonça inaugurates the final group of chapters, which feature a more focused approach to the study of collaboration in specific policy areas.

Her chapter “Paradigms of Public Management and the Historical Evolution of State–CSO Partnerships: A Comparison of AIDS, Social Assistance, and Cultural Policy” provides a longitudinal analysis of collaboration between government and non-profits in the Brazilian national context. By discussing the evolution of normative approaches and managerial practices over time, the author identifies drivers and challenges for success of each partnership form.

Cappiello, Garrone, and Nardi, in their chapter “Infrastructure Projects as a Value Co-creation Process,” focus on local infrastructural initiatives as a model of early-stage collaboration in projects. Their survey data, drawn from local utilities managers in Italy, shows evidence on main perceptions by these key actors on advantages and criticalities in collaborative initiatives.

The following chapter “The Co-production of Housing Policies: Social Housing and Community Land Trust” by Colasanti, Frondizi, and Meneguzzo analyzes innovative housing services provision by highlighting the active role that can be played by beneficiaries, and the potential societal outcomes arising from these experiences.

The chapter “Collaborative Governance: A Successful Case of Public and Private Interaction in the Port City of Naples” by Tomo, Hinna, Mangia, and De Nito develops a narrative on a good practice of government–business networks at the local level. The authors analyze enabling factors for the success of this kind of initiatives, among which a key role is played by stakeholder pressure.

The final chapter by Antonucci, “The Relationships between Government and Civil Society in Performing Public Service Hybrid Organisations: Some Insights from a Comparative Study,” delivers a qualitative study comparing five countries – Denmark, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom – in the context of social care services. The author explores a range of different formats of third sector organizations created in each country, highlighting differences and similarities in each of them as they “hybridize” in the process of delivering a public service. Ideally, this chapter also serves as a bridge toward the second issue of this volume.

Several of the chapters in this book stem from papers presented and discussed in the Public and Non-Profit Management Strategic Interest Group of the European Academy of Management (EURAM), and at the International Research Society for Public Management (IRSPM) and European Group on Public Administration (EGPA) Conferences. We believe that continuing exchange of ideas, methods, and experiences, both within and across the contexts of these research forums, is crucial for advancing knowledge and

understanding of arrangements for public service delivery happening at the crossroads between public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

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