

THE STAKEHOLDER LANDSCAPE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES AND PRACTICES TO FAVOUR PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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EDITORIAL

Local and global transactions and relationships among public as well as private organizations have, on the one hand, been put at risk of survival and, on the other hand, experienced creative configurations through a multi-stakeholder involvement and partnerships (Hudecheck et al, 2020; Sarkis et al., 2020). In the last decade, significant financial, social, health, environmental pressures and crises have driven urgent claims and issues among multiple stakeholder groups, resulting in the public sector proactively forming local and tailored responses involving a range of organizations (Ansell et al., 2020; Meek and Marshall, 2018). Unfortunately, some typical flaws linked to public sector management become even more evident during challenging times (Trincherro et al., 2020). In this special issue, we aim to shed light on how stakeholder participation in the design of public initiatives might increase the value of the public response and improve the collective sense of civic engagement as well as public trust necessary to provide sustainable social outcomes within communities, which can, in turn, furthermore innovative social projects based on joint value creation (Greenwood and van Buren III, 2010).

Stakeholder theorists and scholars in the field of public sector management posit that partnerships and joint collaborations with citizens as well as ones involving cross-sectoral arrangements can generate creative solutions that could mitigate wicked problems during hard times and affirm collaboration as the norm to achieve desirable public value (Ansell and Gash 2008; Freeman et al., 2010; Strand and Freeman, 2019; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Mouraviev and Kakabadse, 2013; Mirvis et al., 2016; Torfing, 2019; Zeyen et al., 2014). To this end, Meek and Marshall (2018) argue that it is through stakeholder actions that the public space can evolve and advance towards increased resiliency and innovation.

Such an evolution is possible when adopting relationship-based frameworks that consider stakeholder thinking and dynamics. This approach focuses on an innovative stakeholder orientation (Casalegno et al., 2020; Civera and Freeman, 2019) based on creating value with stakeholders rather than creating value for stakeholders. This includes moral imagination (Werhane, 2015) as a new way of collaborative thinking that envisions possibilities not only determined by given present circumstances, but also reframing circumstances through new mental models and relationships (Civera and Freeman, 2019). Adopting a participatory multi-stakeholder perspective involving the public and private sector as well

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as the community can certainly be one of the key interpretations to approach urgent matters by combining points of view that were typically divergent and maybe even ignored in the past across sectors. The rise of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs), for instance, is both a response to urgent claims and an opportunity for individuals and organizations to strengthen their relationships and be proactive in the definition of innovative solutions through various perspectives. Moreover, within MSIs, there is more than pure stakeholders' role in that stakeholders have, in fact, names, faces, personal involvement and are part of the key relational capital of public and private entities (McVea & Freeman, 2005). Such an integrated view entails a higher sense of responsibility to be placed on stakeholders that, in the past, were considered to be just the target of decisions. Over time, this has led to a variety of stakeholders actively and jointly participating in the value creation process of the public sector (Boiral & Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2017). Moreover, many are the cases in which stakeholders with different (and sometimes even diverging) claims at stake decide to cooperate and partner in the interest of broader and urgent matters within societies and industries (Zeyen et al., 2016).

However, some of the most common theories and logic about the value of collaboration and partnerships in a multi-stakeholder framework applied to the public sector have remained empirically overlooked or hard to apply (Casalegno et al., 2020). This special issue emphasizes the need to apply a participatory, collaborative, and multi-stakeholder approach in increasingly more challenging and complex social, political, and administrative landscapes. The papers in this special issue further stakeholder and collaborative governance theories by highlighting various collaborative processes and activities within and beyond the public sector, highlighting their strategic advantages and identifying innovative managerial implications. The papers collected in this issue have been produced by authors from various nations utilizing multiple methodologies to further our understanding of collaboration - whose contributions are summarized below - from many different countries and from various methodological perspectives.

The first paper, authored by Shult, Haustein, Lorson, Burbulytė-Tsiskarishvili, Dvorak, Sinervo, Kurkela, and Trutnev, titled "Citizen-centred design of participatory budgeting: A transnational study in the Baltic Sea Region" investigates the role of contingency factors, such as national, local and, individual factors that influence the design of the participatory budgeting process. The authors quantitatively analyze the needs of about 20,000 citizens located in 17 municipalities in six European countries along the Baltic Sea region and show the need for a critical rethinking of both the stages and the content of the participatory budgeting process. In particular, the research outlines that the process of participatory budgeting enacts a virtuous citizens' learning process, made of information sharing and education, that is, on the one hand, directly linked to an increase in citizens' positive attitudes towards the participatory budgeting and, on the other hand, leads to innovation and adaptation of the participatory budgeting process itself.

The second paper, authored by Biancone, Brescia, and Oppioli, titled "Collaborative governance and technologies: A bibliometric analysis" provides a structured literature review of eighty papers developed around the issue of collaborative governance and its integration with technologies, between 2009 and 2022, showing a higher interest in the topic from an academic perspective since 2013. The authors show that collaborative governance among various categories of public and private stakeholders is especially applied in 'smart' cities characterized by high tech adoption. They also highlight that emerging re-

search can be addressed to analyze the role of stakeholder relationships within collaborative governance to support the implementation and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

The third paper, authored by Miguel Pereira Lopes, titled “Pseudo-Bureaucracies as tools for Despotic Leaders: The Case of the 18th Century Government of the Marquis of Pombal” provides knowledge to understand how despotic leaders behave and which strategies they utilize. This sounds useful for the present since the emergence of despotic leaders is often associated with epochs of societal crisis, such as that we currently live in worldwide. Behaviors, attitudes, and strategies considered in this paper can represent at the same time a warning and a compendium for understanding how despotic situations can and must be avoided when the main aim is to pursue a discourse based on the co-creation of value.

The fourth paper, authored by Nduhura, Molokwane, Lukamba, Nuwagaba, Kadondi and Can, titled “Procuring unsolicited bids without losing the innovation ingredient: implementation lessons for public-private partnerships for developing countries,” explores the practice of procuring unsolicited bids for public-private partnerships (PPPs) from an international perspective to inform best practices in developing countries. It contributes to knowledge of PPP arrangements and processes by providing a systematic review of the understanding of unsolicited proposals (USPs), their practice, and incentive frameworks for USP originators. Procuring innovation through USPs presents a unique and peculiar challenge for those meaningful partnerships from which the whole community can benefit, especially in emerging countries characterized by a protective economic policy for the indigenous group. At the same time, such countries may be desiring to achieve greater economic growth through investment and cooperation with the private sector by promoting PPPs

The fifth paper, authored by Tampio, Haapasalo(s), and Ali, titled “The Stakeholder Landscape In The Public Healthcare Process – Challenges, Elements, And Implications For Stakeholder Management” proposes an updated stakeholder analysis framework to examine collaborations. Using a case study analyzing a public health care management collaboration in the Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District of Finland, the authors describe stakeholder management along the dynamics of complexity, uncertainty, dynamism, and institutional context. More specifically, the study utilizes organizations with public and private sector connections as the main unit of analysis (i.e. stakeholder) collaborating in public health mission delivery. The dynamics specifically point to the complexity of the healthcare landscape, uncertainty driven by instability of information among stakeholders, dynamism reflected in changes within and across stakeholders, and the personal interactions as well as competing values across institution types represented among stakeholders. All of these factors can better identify and understand the challenges, opportunities and processes involved in collaborative governance—particularly in the unique context of public health care management.

The sixth and last paper, authored by Amaya-Ventura titled “Politics And Policy: Power And Performativity In Mexican Local Water Management” examines the socio-political nature of public private partnerships. The paper entails analyzing data from four cases in local water management in Mexico to illustrate power dynamics within collaborative arrangement. The framework emerging from the study contributes to better understanding how the following factors impact water utility performance: political appointments, citizen water usage and pay rates, citizen participation in water policy and management, information sharing, and consensus building among water utility stakeholders. The value

of this study highlights how political and legislative processes, behaviors, and outcomes shape power in collaborative arrangements involving public and private organizations as well as citizens. More specifically, the framework and analysis highlights how power may wax and wane among stakeholders, thereby shaping how such a critical natural resource is distributed.

Eventually, the special issue ends with a review conducted by Clay Westcott, President at the International Public Management Network, on the book titled “How Democracies die” by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (New York: Crown, 2018). In his review, the author outlines the need for acceptance and toleration of both citizens’ and opponents’ claims in order to keep democracies intact, in a way that is highly consistent with the main principles of stakeholder theory, such as fairness and collaboration. The book review by Westcott finds its perfect placement in this special issue, to remark that a multi-stakeholder orientation adopted by governments can not just benefit the effective management of public services or cities; it also allows the survival of democratic nations.

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