

Critical analysis of compliance and cooperation in Collaborative Governance through application of a structured framework

Key Words

Collaboration; Power; Trust; Collaborative Governance.

Introduction

The growth of collaborative governance systems may have outpaced scholarship (Emerson & Nabatchi (2016)—researchers, practitioners, and students are working hard to understand how such systems emerge, what makes them work, and whether they are producing their intended effects (Andrews & Entwistle, 2010). The aim of this research is to fill a gap in knowledge and practice by undertaking a critical analysis of compliance and cooperation arising from power and trust relationships in situations of business collaboration. The combination is yet to be tested. The research tests whether a structured approach ‘slippery slope’ method applied to contrasting collaborative situations, thus far applied to tax and shared consumer service, can contribute to improved business collaboration outcomes.

Background

The literature on collaboration has identified several potential benefits including improved coordination of activities, better leveraging and pooling of resources, increased social capital, enhanced conflict management (prevention, reduction, and resolution), better knowledge management (including generation, translation, and diffusion), increased risk-sharing in policy experimentation, and increased policy compliance (Agranoff, 2008; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Leach & Sabatier, 2005; Provan & Milward, 1995). Likewise, outcomes can be unpredictable, short lived and expensive (Vangen & Huxham, 2003). There are serious problems with measuring the cost efficiency of networked policy processes (Sørensen 2009). The output of governance networks can be extremely difficult to quantify, since it often includes intangible results such as joint problem understandings, common values, future visions, enhanced coordination, cooperative processes, and so on. Moreover, it is exceedingly troublesome to measure the total costs of networked policy outputs since the governance networks in question are seldom in control of the production of the tangible and intangible policy outputs.

Collaborative governance has a popular following but a mixed track record of sustainable outcomes (Sorensen and Torfing 2009). Arguably, improved outcomes where collaboration takes place may feasibly come from the recognition that power and trust relationships, often unequal from the start, are overlooked and should be managed as part of a collaborative system (Gash & Ansell 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi 2016). Better understanding and management of the may improve outcomes and reduce costs. The research will critically evaluate collaborative governance and the relationship of both organisations and individuals in active collaborative situations.

A systematic review of literature shows that whilst the detailed address to the both power and trust singularly has been undertaken, a framework that brings both together as a means of analysis and improvement in collaborative arrangements outcomes has not been developed. An initial systematic review of literature revealed a framework applied to taxation policy the 'slippery slope' (Gangl et al; 2015) that contained a seemingly workable method that could be adapted and applied more widely to collaborative governance. This research will apply the framework to collaboration initiatives and test its applicability to improve how they are run, managed and their outcomes achieved.

Research Approach

The research will firstly undertake a systematic review of literature to assess the significance and relationships between power and trust in collaborative governance and in so doing derive the key factors that need to be taken into account when undertaking a research project. The literature review thus far undertaken that the 'slippery slope' framework with some adaptation and modification, thus far applied to taxation policy, is suitable to test power and trust in collaborative arrangements. The research will develop a detailed methodology for primary data collection method to test the 'slippery slope' in situations of collaboration. It is proposed up to three contrasting contexts are analysed by seeking to obtain insider access to the initiatives in differing contexts. In this way the project will develop a network of contact points in senior positions across the initiatives for the purposes of information gathering and primary data collection. Primary data collection will be by quantitative electronic questionnaire to obtain baseline information across the respondents followed up by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire which will be derived from literature on power and trust relationships in collaborative environments will be administered electronically to collaboration participants and initial results analysed. Based on the results and triangulated to the literature review, a series of semi-structured interviews will be undertaken to clarify the value of a framework approach. The findings will be coded against power and trust criteria derived from the literature for the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The various initiatives will be tested and compared to see if the structured approach to power and trust imbalances and resultant collaborative states (antagonistic/voluntary or committed) are anticipated to lead to improved outcomes .

Discussion/conclusions

The research aims to see whether the application of a structured framework recognising the forces of power and trust in collaborative governance gives improved outcomes where where there is recognition that power and trust relationships, as noted often unequal from the start or predisposed in unfavourable contexts at the outset, are overlooked and should be managed as part of a collaborative system (Gash & Ansell 2008; Emerson & Nabatchi 2016). By adapting and testing the structured method empirically it may be possible outputs can be made more sustainable or deficiencies recognised sooner. The research will draw conclusions and recommendations whether the structured approach is transferable and how and whether it might be adapted to be used as a tool to improve collaborations in various collaboration

contexts. Empirical evidence collected may find it is simply impractical to expect participants to be able to reveal the power/trust nexus as they work. There is no clear view on timing, to collect such information, during or after cessation of activities. There is also no clear view whether individuals or organisational norms are more important to outcomes. However, the research will seek to analyse the essential power/trust nexus to assess whether it is feasible and beneficial to employ a structured framework.

A critical requirement and aim for the discussion, is to identify a number of collaboration projects upon which the research can be undertaken. This phase is currently underway. Potential subject this far include the following but up to three are sought.

- Welsh Government Corporate Joint Committees – still in consultation phase, regional coordination of public services across unitary authority areas - mandatory participation
- Public Service Boards – Annual well-being plans under Future Generations Act – mandatory
- Cardiff Capital regions City Deal – multiple projects tackling economic development

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