New Models of Collaboration for the Delivering of Government Services: Preliminary Results of a Multinational Investigation

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Research Design

**Scope:** a multi-national investigation of new models of collaboration in several Western democracies (Canada, US, Belgium, Germany, Brazil)

**Objectives:** to enhance understanding of multi-organizational partnerships engaged in the delivery of government services to citizens & businesses; to identify transferrable lessons

**Methodology:** 20 individual case studies; interviews and document analysis; individual case, cross-case and cross-national comparisons according to a conceptual model of collaboration
Types of collaboration studied

- Public-public collaborations:
  - Horizontal agreements between 2 agencies or departments at the same level of government
  - Vertical agreements or intergovernmental alliances between different levels

- Public-private collaborations:
  - Outsourcing, subcontracting
  - PPP or P3

- Public-nonprofit collaborations
Research partners

- **International Research Centers:**
  - Centre Francophone d’Informatisation des Organisation (CEFRIIO): Major Research Partner
  - University of Bremen, Germany
  - University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
    - Cellule Interfacultaire de Technology Assessment, Belgium

- **US Universities:**
  - University at Albany, Center for Technology in Government
  - Indiana University, School of Environmental & Public Affairs
  - University of Maryland Baltimore County, Department of Information Science
Dimensions of the conceptual model

- Political, social, economic & cultural environment
- Institutional, business & technical environment
- Partners characteristics and objectives
- Collaboration process over time
- Mode of collaboration
- Collaboration and program performance
Inside the conceptual model

1. Political, social, economic and cultural environment

2. Institutional, business and technical environment

3. Citizens’ characteristics and objectives

3. Public partners’ characteristics and objectives

3. Private partners’ characteristics and objectives

4. Collaboration process

Start-up → Search for partners → Initiation → Implementation → Operation/management → Cessation

Negotiation → Assessment → Commitment

Execution

5. Modes of collaboration

6. Project and collaboration performance
First case studies

- Casdastre Quebec
  - public-private effort to completely revise the systems that record property characteristics and ownership for tax purposes.

- New York State Geographic Information System Cooperative
  - public-public effort to identify, share, and improve the quality and availability of spatial data
Preliminary questions

- Is the model a good guide for data collection about all dimensions?
- Does it capture key dynamics of the collaborations?
- Is it flexible enough to account for differences in the cases and their cultural settings?
Guide to data collection

- Cultural differences - and their effects - are not captured well
- Structure of the participants is captured, but structure of the collaboration is not
- Participants’ initial motives are captured, but not changes over time
- Technology is well represented
- Predicted critical success factors are captured but there are others
Dynamics of collaboration

- Predicted stages are too rigid to capture the real dynamics
- Feedback and learning over time are under-emphasized
- Links among the dimensions are more pervasive and important than expected
Accounting for cultural differences

- Culture is not just environmental, it’s behavioral - and pervasive
- Language differences are more subtle and important than we thought
- Translation is not translation is not translation
Next steps

- A revised, more dynamic model
- Changes in approach to data collection
- More attention to translation pitfalls
- More aware research teams
Model v.2

Political, Social, Economic and Cultural Environment

Institutional, Business and Technical Environment

- Participants and their Objectives
- Collaboration Structure, Process, & Dynamics over Time
- Modes & Methods of Collaboration

Collaboration Performance

Service Performance