2. Collaboration: key concepts

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the basic concepts of collaboration and collaborative governance and how they have recently developed over a range of cognate discussions in the fields of public policy, public administration and governance. Issues of coordination and cooperation in government are a very old concern in these fields and attention to collaboration is therefore far from new (Seidman 1975). But collaboration has increasingly been recognized as a distinctive strategy for management and governance (McGuire 2006).

The contemporary interest in collaboration and collaborative governance emerged out of a series of overlapping debates across a number of related fields. One very important touchstone of the contemporary discussion is an influential typology that contrasted three basic organizational forms: markets, hierarchies and networks. In his influential work on transaction cost economics, Oliver Williamson (1983) argued for an organizational continuum that ranged from the discrete transactions of markets to the administrative fiat of hierarchies. In response, an organizational sociologist, Walter Powell (1990), famously argued that this continuum failed to capture a third distinct organizational form that he called a 'network.' Networks were coordinated neither by discrete arms-length exchanges nor by administrative fiat, but rather by trust and reciprocity.

This argument was buttressed by rising interest in the concept of networks in sociology, political science, and public administration (Ansell 2006; Sørensen and Torfing 2007). The markets–hierarchies–networks typology also slotted well into rising debates about New Public Management (NPM), which advanced the efficiency of market-like discipline for the public sector. From this perspective, conventional public administration reflected the hierarchical organizational forms of traditional Weberian bureaucracies (hierarchy), while NPM encouraged contracting, privatization and competition (market). Paralleling the Williamson–Powell typology, governance scholars asserted the importance of governance networks that were distinct from either tradi-

tional bureaucracy or NPM contracting (Osborne 2006). Generally speaking, governance networks were understood to operate collaboratively and the terms network governance and collaborative governance have often been used interchangeably.

A third stream of thought that contributed significantly to this discussion was a substantial body of work on interorganizational coordination and cooperation. This work developed an 'open system' perspective emphasizing that organizations must engage with their environments in order to survive and prosper. One very influential version of this work developed an 'exchange' perspective and argued that organizations must engage in exchange with other organizations in order to manage their reciprocal interdependence (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). This exchange theory was very influential with early network governance theorists (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998; Rhodes 2007). However, the work that grew out of this tradition of studying interorganizational coordination and cooperation with the most direct impact on the emerging discussion of collaborative governance was Barbara Gray's book, *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (1989). This work inspired many of the subsequent statements about collaboration and collaborative governance.

The remainder of this chapter explores how the concepts of collaboration and collaborative governance have developed since Gray's important statement. The purpose is to provide a nuanced account of the diversity and commonality in how scholars use these concepts. Concept formation has received significant attention in recent years and is essential for good theoretical and empirical work (Collier and Mahon 1993; Collier and Adcock 1999; Gerring and Barresi 2003; Bevir and Kedar 2008). My own view of concept formation can be summarized as follows: (1) social science concepts are inherently linked to ordinary language and it is desirable that they are easily comprehensible within ordinary language; (2) concepts exist within an often crowded 'semantic field' and it is valuable to consider how a concept overlaps with and is distinct from cognate concepts; (3) social science concepts are developed for different analytical purposes and with different agendas and thus inevitably develop plural meanings; (4) there is no 'concept god' to dictate the correctness of conceptual interpretation, but it is useful to strengthen and support shared understandings where possible; (5) scholarly communication is facilitated by transparent discussions of how a concept is intended to be used for a particular purpose; (6) definitions are a critical aspect of concept formation because they establish criteria for evaluating whether a specific 'case' represents the concept; (7) it can be useful to think of definitions as telescoping from very spare ('minimal definitions') to more elaborate ('ideal-typical definition'), with corresponding implications for empirical analysis (e.g. minimal definitions generally encompass a wider range of cases); (8) empirical application of a concept requires consistent interpretive inferences about whether cases fit concepts; (9) con-

cepts should be defined in ways that make their implications observable and easily applied, but we should also avoid allowing data availability to dictate definitions; and (10) our definitions should avoid incorporating features that we would ultimately like to use the concept to explain.

These commitments broadly guide the remainder of the chapter. A first step in elucidating the concepts of collaboration and collaborative governance is to consider the kind of contextual discourse that orients and to some extent justifies our interest in these topics. I will call these ‘images of collaboration,’ because I believe they shape our attitude to collaboration and collaborative governance and often form the backdrop of our analytical discussions. Understandings of collaboration and collaborative governance often make implicit reference to specific anchoring ideas that I call here ‘images.’

IMAGES OF COLLABORATION

The first image is one of institutional fragmentation and ‘siloed’ government, a product of the scale and specialization of government. The proliferation of policies and programs, divergent agency missions, intergovernmental relations and other similar factors create interorganizational coordination and cooperation challenges that have been a longstanding concern in public administration (Bardach 1998; Thomas 2002; Keast, Brown, and Mandell 2007). Although many issues can be addressed via the hierarchical administration of a single public agency, institutional fragmentation also creates interorganizational interdependence and a world of ‘shared power’ (Bryson and Crosby 1992). Governing in this fragmented and plural environment therefore produces a ‘collaboration imperative’ (Kettl 2006) that requires working across boundaries (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012). Multi-organizational ‘networks’ are the structural means of addressing this imperative (Agranoff and McGuire 1998) and collaboration as opposed to hierarchy is necessary to successfully manage them (Agranoff and McGuire 2004). This image has been particularly important in the development of the concept of *collaborative public management* (Kapucu, Yuldashev, and Bakiev 2009).

A second image also stresses the fragmentation of government but focuses attention on the effects of New Public Management (NPM) reforms. By creating special-purpose arms-length agencies, through processes of privatization and public contracting, and by introducing competition as a strategy for achieving efficiency, NPM has accentuated coordination problems (Christensen and Lægreid 2007). With its ‘hollowing out of the state,’ NPM’s emphasis on contracting accentuates links between public and private actors (Milward and Provan 2000). Anchored in this image is the view that collaboration is a counterpoint to competition (Milward and Provan 2003; Osborne 2006). From this perspective, the emphasis on ‘partnership’ represents a more

collaborative alternative to a narrower focus on market-based contracts. The British literature on networks has particularly emphasized this contrast between competition and collaboration (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998).

A third image begins with the perspective that problems are complex or wicked. Their interdependent and multidimensional nature demands interdependent and multidimensional solutions (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). Collaboration is therefore a strategy for mobilizing innovative solutions to complex problems (Sørensen and Torfing 2011). It enables diverse bases of specialized knowledge, resources, and authority to be linked together to flexibly address wicked problems (Weber and Khademian 2008). This might be called the systems image, because a systems theory perspective motivates the approach to collaborative problem-solving (e.g. Wagenaar 2007; Koliba et al. 2010; Head and Alford 2013; Walker, Daniels, and Emborg 2015).

A fourth image begins with the narrative of governance itself, which arises due to the decentering of government and the corresponding expansion of the role of private actors (Rhodes 1996, 1997, 2007). These changes shift the initiative from the core executive and top-down hierarchical control to more diffuse policy networks. These policy networks are, to a significant extent, ‘self-organizing’ or ‘self-governing’ (Sørensen and Triantafyllou 2013). A very similar image—though derived more or less independently—stresses the ‘polycentric’ (overlapping and nested) character of governing institutions and the value of ‘self-governing’ communities (e.g. Ostrom 2010). From both perspectives, collaboration is a mode of community self-governing operating in the ‘shadow of the state.’

A fifth image understands collaboration as a strategy of producing innovation and public value (Sørensen and Torfing 2011). From this perspective, collaborative governance has the potential to synergistically bring together knowledge, resources, skills, and perspectives to deliver improved public services and public goods (Huxham 1996; Lasker and Weiss 2003; Donahue and Zeckhauser 2011). This might be called the public value image, because it points to the opportunities for collaboration to create value (e.g. Page et al. 2015).

A sixth image grew out of a focus on conflict resolution and legal adversarialism. From this perspective, the interest in collaboration arises out of a concern for the costs of conflictual legal and regulatory environments, leading to a search for strategies of ‘alternative dispute resolution’ (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Freeman 1997; Bingham 2009; Fisher, Ury, and Patton 2011). In this image, collaborative governance offers an alternative to legal adversarialism. Bingham, for instance, argues that collaborative governance is “deliberative and consensual as distinguished from adversarial or adjudicative” (Bingham 2010: 299).

A seventh image of collaboration grew out of a focus on interest intermediation and policy subsystems. Interest intermediation can range from more competitive pluralist interest group systems to more negotiated and consensus-seeking corporatist systems, while policy subsystems can range from open issue networks to closed iron triangles. From this perspective, collaborative governance is an exploration of how to constructively manage interest group conflict in an open and inclusive fashion. This is a political image of collaboration because it emphasizes competing or conflicting stakeholder agendas (Ansell and Gash 2008).

An eighth and final image is one of democratic participation and deliberation. On the one hand, the decentering of governance creates potential opportunities for citizens to participate directly in governing (Vigoda 2002; Newman et al. 2004; Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005; Bingham 2010; Sirianni 2010) and creates opportunities for a more deliberative style of policymaking and governance (Innes and Booher 2003; Roberts 2004; Wagenaar 2007; Nabatchi 2010). On the other hand, it is possible that the informal basis of collaborative networks may actually produce democratic deficits and problems of accountability and erode or elude institutions of representative democracy (Papadopoulos 2003, 2012; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007). Whether imagined positively or negative, collaborative governance is understood in terms of its democratic character.

These eight images have been arrayed to suggest both how they overlap and how they are distinctive. They are not mutually exclusive and many of the authors cited above appeal to multiple images. While they can be complementary, it is useful to distinguish them because they suggest different anchoring references for understanding collaboration and collaborative governance. The first image of institutional fragmentation and 'siloed' government sees collaboration as a non-hierarchical means of managing interorganizational interdependence—it contrasts collaboration to hierarchy. The second image, which stresses the importance of NPM reform, largely shares this view but also sees collaboration as an alternative to competition—thus, it contrasts collaboration with markets. The wicked problem (third) image anchors the understanding of collaboration to challenges of complex interdependence and the decentered governance (fourth) image anchors it to the necessity for and the potential advantages of community self-governing. The four final images all see collaboration as being a potentially positive relationship, but they emphasize different reasons why. The public value (fifth) image emphasizes the possibility of achieving synergies among different actors, while the fifth (legal adversarialism) stresses that collaboration reduces the costs of legal conflict and the sixth (interest intermediation) emphasizes the ability to manage political conflict. The eighth image focuses on the enhancement or erosion of democratic values.

As this account of different images suggests, there are subtle and not-so-subtle differences here in the anchoring references for what is meant by the term ‘collaboration.’ This conceptual pluralism is the inevitable result of how social science concepts emerge out of the soup of ideas and research agendas. But do not despair. The important point is to have a sense of what is meant by collaboration for specific purposes. The following sections explore the meaning of collaboration and collaborative governance used in this volume and how it relates to other possible meanings.

COLLABORATION: THE RELATIONSHIP

In the introductory chapter to this volume, Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh identify three generic modes of governance—hierarchy, market and network. Their discussion suggests that these generic modes are overlapping rather than discrete, which in turn implies that they are not mutually exclusive categories (see their Figure 1.2). They further deepen their analysis by specifying six hybrid subtypes that combine these modes of governance in various ways—consultation, contracting, commissioning, co-production, co-management and certification. In their account, collaboration essentially refers to governance arrangements that bridge across sectors—between government and civil society, between government and the market, and between civil society and the market. Their account is similar to Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh’s well-known definition of collaboration governance:

We define collaborative governance broadly as the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished. (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012: 2; see also Emerson and Nabatchi 2015: 18)

The cross-sectoral emphasis of Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh’s six collaborative governance types is also broadly consistent with the images of collaboration as shared power and working across boundaries (image 1), the decentering of government (image 4), and the expansion of opportunities for participation (image 8).

While cross-sector governance arrangements can be collaborative in this sense, this account is in some tension with other interpretations that see hierarchy, market and networks as three different kinds of relationships. To reconcile these differences, it is useful to appreciate that the term ‘collaboration’ (or ‘collaborative’) operates at different levels of analysis. For Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh, collaboration refers to a pattern of service delivery that combines different sectors. For others, however, collaboration may be referring to *how*

two or more individuals, organizations or sectors interact. From this perspective, collaborative relationships are often characterized as *different from* hierarchical or market relationships.

It is useful to distinguish between *collaboration*—as a descriptor or property of a given relationship—and *collaborative governance*—as a descriptor or property of a broader mode of governing. In an influential paper examining the concept of collaboration and its measurement, Thompson and Perry advance the following definition of collaboration:

Collaboration is a process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions. (Thomson and Perry 2006: 23)¹

Although Thompson and Perry do not distinguish between collaboration and collaborative governance, this definition stresses the relational character of collaboration. Collaboration is a relationship where the parties to the collaboration have relatively autonomous capacities—that is, they enjoy their own authority, power, or position. Although these capacities may vary considerably, the concept of collaboration makes little sense if the stakeholder does not have a considerable degree of autonomy. This feature is fundamental for collaboration in at least two senses. The first is that participation is understood to be, to a significant degree, voluntary, which in turn means that the collaborative process must be rooted in a process of mutual consent. The second is that the autonomy of stakeholders distinguishes collaborative relationships from hierarchical ones. In a hierarchy, there is a subordinate party that acts in response to authority, command, or coercion (e.g. administrative fiat) and is not autonomous.

Another important aspect of the Thompson and Perry definition is that autonomous parties jointly create the rules and norms governing their interaction. Building on Bardach's concept of jointness, Thompson and Perry stress that collaboration exhibits jointness, which means that autonomous parties work together to produce a jointly-determined framework for action and a joint product. Jointness implies both joint decision, joint production and joint outcomes. The Thompson and Perry definition also specifies that joint production and outcomes are expected by the involved parties to be 'mutually beneficial.' As Huxham puts it: "collaboration" is taken to imply a very positive form of working in association with others for some form of mutual benefit" (Huxham 1996: 1).

The Thompson and Perry definition describes collaboration as a process of 'formal and informal negotiation.' To what extent does this descrip-

tion encompass the contractual relationships typical of markets? Note that Powell's original (1990) discussion of networks—which he titled 'Neither Market Nor Hierarchy'—contrasted market and network relationships. Indeed, some authors contrast collaboration with arms-length contracting (Mandell and Steelman 2003). However, contracts themselves vary and if a contract requires the relational negotiation of the details of the exchange, it may fit the Thompson and Perry understanding of collaboration. Donahue and Zeckhauser (2011) explicitly discuss collaboration in contractual terms. They define collaborative governance as "carefully structured arrangements that interweave public and private capabilities on the basis of *shared discretion*" (2011: 4). They see collaborative governance as a form of delegation by which public actors carefully structure the discretion that private actors have. While many forms of contract allow little discretion, other contractual relations allow public and private actors to share control over means and ends.

To summarize, in the governance literature collaborative relationships are typically distinguished from purely hierarchical relationship, on the one hand, and arms-length market relationships, on the other. Before considering how the relational understanding of collaboration relates to the cross-sectoral perspective advanced by Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh, it is useful to further consider here whether we should treat collaboration (the relationship) as a categorical or a continuous variable.

COLLABORATION: DICHOTOMOUS OR CONTINUOUS VARIABLE?

Should we simply regard a relationship as collaborative or not? Or are relationships more or less collaborative? This issue is analogous to a debate in political science about how to conceptualize democracy—a debate that drives home the implications of such choices. Is a regime either democratic or not democratic? Or should we focus on whether a regime is more or less democratic? Should we consider Russia under Putin to be, categorically, a 'dictatorship' or a 'democracy'? Or is it more analytically useful to consider whether Russia falls somewhere along a spectrum that runs from dictatorship to democracy?

Collier and Adcock (1999) investigate the pragmatic claims and counterclaims for treating democracy as a dichotomous or continuous variable. One justification for dichotomies is that they capture the systemic nature of a concept or object (a 'bounded whole') better than continuous variables do. For example, if a regime has many of the trappings of democracy (competitive elections, elected parliaments, etc.), but important decisions are still made by an unaccountable junta, then the regime is still a dictatorship rather than a partial democracy. Another justification for dichotomies is that we are interested in events such as the transition from one regime to another—from

dictatorship to democracy. Analyzing such transitional events requires a clear specification of the threshold where one type of regime becomes another type. Specification of a clear threshold may also be warranted where normative standards or perceptual judgments demand it. A third justification is that dichotomies may capture the empirically clustered distribution of a variable. However, Collier and Adcock argue that these justifications for treating a variable as dichotomous have to be weighed against the value of having a more differentiated account of a variable. By defining measurement gradations along a spectrum or by identifying more differentiated subtypes, it may be possible to develop a more nuanced understanding of certain concepts (see also Collier and Levitsky 1997).

One attempt to make collaboration a more differentiated concept is advanced by Keast, Brown, and Mandell (2007), who examine collaborative relationships in contrast with two other closely related terms—coordination and cooperation. Based on interviews and focus groups with those working in public service integration in Australia and New Zealand, the authors place these terms on a spectrum of ‘horizontal integration’ that runs from ‘fully fragmented’ to ‘fully integrated.’ On this spectrum, cooperation implies the least integration and collaboration the most, with coordination falling in the middle. Cooperation is regarded as a low intensity form of integration in which the parties maintain their full autonomy. ‘Intensity’ refers to the amount of energy that partners must invest in relationships, which are short-term, informal, and often limited to information exchange. Cooperation is essentially ‘getting along with others’ and it provides the basis for coordination, which requires a greater investment of time and energy. Thus, it tends to be somewhat more formalized than cooperation and entails more exposure to risk. Coordination, however, remains instrumental and task-focused and it implies specialization. Although it requires a mutual alignment of agendas, it does not require development of ‘shared goals’ or entail a significant loss of autonomy. Collaboration, by contrast, requires a still more significant investment in relationships with the goal of producing shared agendas (see O’Leary and Vij (2012) for similar distinctions), which in turn requires high levels of trust and a more time-consuming process. The investment in shared agendas implies greater potential loss of autonomy and greater risk. In summary, they argue that:

...the terms cooperation, coordination, and collaboration differ in terms of level of intensity of linkages between organizations, the degree of formalization involved, the presence of decision rules, the kinds of goals emphasized, the amount of resources and primary actors involved, and the relative threat to autonomy and risk. (Keast, Brown, and Mandell 2007: 25)

This description brings us back to the point about ‘jointness.’ Keast, Brown, and Mandell are stressing that collaboration has a higher degree of jointness than cooperation or coordination.²

To develop a more continuous—as opposed to dichotomous—perspective on the relationship between hierarchy, market, and collaboration, we can draw on two dimensions highlighted in the previous discussion—autonomy and jointness. In contrast with a collaborative relationship, subordinate members in a hierarchical relationship lack autonomy—that is, they are bound by the decisions of their superordinates. Although superordinates and subordinates may be bound in a community of fate—and thus experience a jointness of outcomes—collective decisions in hierarchical relationship are made unilaterally, not jointly. Nevertheless, there is no reason to think that the concepts of hierarchy and collaboration are dichotomous. Indeed, there is much work in organization theory and public administration pointing to intermediate and hybrid arrangements (Adler and Borys 1996; McGuire 2006; Agranoff 2014; Bardach 2017).

Understanding the relationship between hierarchy and collaboration as a continuous variable may also help us to appreciate the role of consultation. Often, public agencies solicit information from non-state organizations and from the public for purposes of governing. Imagine the state conducting a citizen survey or conducting a focus group with non-profit service providers. The information produced by such consultation may be very useful for purposes of governing, but is this consultation collaborative? A strictly dichotomous interpretation of the relationship between hierarchy and collaboration would suggest that it is not. Consultation implies that decision making is not fully ‘joint.’ However, a more continuous view of this relationship would suggest that consultation is an intermediate case between unilateral ‘command and control’ and fully joint collaboration.

A similar point can be made about the relationship between markets and collaboration. In both market exchanges and collaborative exchanges, the parties to the exchange are autonomous. As noted earlier, we do not typically think of a ‘spot market’ or an ‘arms-length contract’ as a collaborative relationship. Such exchanges imply limited interaction and almost no joint decision making about the rules or norms that govern the transaction. However, relational contracting (Van Slyke 2009) implies much greater interaction between contracting parties and contractual forms like joint ventures and public–private partnerships imply a much higher degree of jointness (Donahue and Zeckhauser 2011). Thus, we can imagine a spectrum of exchange relationship that vary according to their level of interaction and jointness.

Returning to Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh, we can see that they define collaboration at the regime rather than the relational level. The governance arrangements they describe are collaborative in the sense that they bridge

across sectors. However, the relationships embedded in these governance arrangements may still vary in terms of their relative autonomy, degree of interaction and jointness. To further situate their argument, it is useful to explore how collaborative governance has been conceptualized at a regime level.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AS A REGIME

Although there is no sharp delineation in the literature between the relationship and regime levels-of-analysis, many scholars of collaborative governance are focused on how *a set of relationships* is collectively governed and how this pattern of governance relates to particular collective objectives—a focus generally indicated by a shift from talking about ‘collaboration’ to talking about ‘collaborative governance.’ Consider the definition advanced by Ansell and Gash, who define collaborative governance as:

A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets. (Ansell and Gash 2008: 544)

This definition suggests a concern for the wider ‘governing arrangement’ covering multiple stakeholders who engage in a ‘collective decision making process.’ Following Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015), we can refer to this more systemic or collective level-of-analysis as a ‘collaborative governance regime,’ which they define as: “particular mode of, or system for, public decision making in which cross-boundary collaboration represents the prevailing pattern of behavior and activity” (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012: 6; Emerson and Nabatchi 2015: 18).

The point is that as we shift from the relationship level to the governance level, our attention becomes more focused on a collective or systemic pattern of collaboration. Typically, this shift entails a move from a dyadic or bilateral focus to a network or multilateral perspective.

The Ansell and Gash (2008) definition, for example, adopts a multilateral perspective by emphasizing that collaborative governance is a ‘collective decision making process that is formal, consensus-oriented and deliberative.’ From this perspective, collaborative governance implies a situation where all of the stakeholders are in the same room engaged in a simultaneous negotiation. ‘Deliberation’ implies that these stakeholders are engaged in multilateral communication such that each of the parties can speak directly with every other party. This is a political image of collaborative governance (e.g. image

seven) that seeks to distinguish collaborative governance from conventional bilateral relationships that public agencies develop with stakeholder groups.

Moving to the governance level also requires attention to how a collective decision making process will work. How does a collaborative decision making process reach decisions? In hierarchical processes, decisions are made by command or fiat. By contrast, the collective decision making processes associated with collaborative governance are often consensus-oriented. The point is not that collaborative governance is inherently cooperative, because it is often deployed as a technique in high conflict situations. But given the largely voluntary nature of participation, the lack of overarching authority, the limited role of representation, and the desire to achieve joint outcomes, the collaborative problem-solving process leans heavily on consensus to move forward. Majoritarian voting rules are likely to be a last resort, since they may encourage losers to withdraw their support.

A final point is that the decisions made in these deliberative forums need to be consequential. The motivation for stakeholders to engage in collaboration is likely to be eroded if they sense that their input is symbolic or irrelevant. If a collaborative forum is regarded as a mere ‘talking shop,’ stakeholders will have trouble having the tough conversations that effective collaboration often requires. In many cases, however, the decisions of a collaborative body are legally limited to being advisory. For stakeholders to engage seriously in collaborative problem-solving, they must believe that their advice will be taken seriously and may be consequential. In the Ansell and Gash definition, this emphasis on consequences is implied by the phrase ‘aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.’ In the Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh definition of collaborative governance, it is implied by the phrase ‘to carry out a public purpose.’³

Following our earlier discussion, collaborative governance may also be interpreted in dichotomous or continuous terms. The criteria discussed here (‘a collective decision making process that is formal, consensus-oriented and deliberative’) might be treated as categorical (you either meet them or you don’t) or more elastic (more or less collective, formal, consensus-oriented or deliberative) in nature.

I now consider how the six governance subtypes discussed by Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh can be understood vis-à-vis this broader discussion of collaboration and collaborative governance.

SIX SUBTYPES OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh’s introduction describes six types of collaboration—consultation, contracting, commissioning, co-production, co-management and certification. In this context, *consultation* refers to cases where agencies

provide services, but seek feedback from citizens or users in order to improve those services (Johnson 2009). *Contracting* refers to the use of contractual arrangements—typically between a public institution and a private organization—to provide some good or service (Milward and Provan 2006). In its contemporary use, *commissioning* refers to the strategic steering of service design and procurement in order to meet certain public needs (Bovaird, Briggs, and Willis 2014). The term *co-production* generally refers to the involvement of third sector organizations or citizens in the production of services (Brandsen and Pestoff 2006). *Co-management* is similar to co-production, but typically refers to public–private partnerships where third sector organizations play a prominent role (Brandsen and Hout 2006). The term *certification* typically refers to a form of ‘non-state market-driven’ regulation that offers recognition for achieving some standard in exchange for verification of compliance, typically by a third-party certifier (Cashore 2002).

How do these six governance arrangements fit the conceptualizations of collaboration and collaborative governance developed above? As argued earlier, the Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh treatment of collaborative governance arrangements operates primarily at the regime level and emphasizes the cross-sectoral nature of such arrangements. In this sense, each of the six types of governance they identify is collaborative in nature. However, we can also apply the standards discussed in the previous sections to these governance arrangements, using them as benchmarks for evaluating how collaborative these arrangements are in practice. With respect to collaborative relationships, we use three standards: participant autonomy, interaction intensity and jointness of decision making and production. With respect to collaborative governance, the standard is whether these regimes create collective, multilateral and deliberative decision making processes. In applying these standards, it is useful to adopt a continuous rather than a dichotomous perspective.

Consultation is widely used in the public sector to gauge stakeholder opinion and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service provision. Consultation may take many forms, including surveys, focus groups, hearings, informal contact, advisory committees, notice-and-comment processes, and various forms of deliberative practice. As noted earlier, consultation may be an intermediate step between a fully hierarchical provision of services, where stakeholders and citizens are given no input into service design or delivery, and fully collaborative arrangements where public agencies engage in joint decision making with stakeholders and citizens. In its most limited form, consultation harvests information or opinion from citizens or stakeholders—an aggregation that implies a limited form of communicative exchange while leaving agencies fully in control of the agenda. Although the information and opinion gathered by these means may influence agency decisions, the relationship between the aggregated information and actual decisions may be

ambiguous and indirect. Moreover, many instances of consultation are neither multilateral nor deliberative in character. Public hearings, for example, may be organized as a series of speakers representing different groups who are then sequentially questioned by the hearing sponsors. Alternatively, public hearings may be organized as panels of government officials who present official information to the public before fielding questions from the audience. These types of communicative exchanges may be useful, but they do not meet the standards of joint decision making or multilateral deliberation. Some consultation processes, however, do approach or attain these standards. Advisory committees, deliberative polling, and stakeholder dialogues, for example, may be fully multilateral and deliberative processes, though the outputs from these processes may only be selectively used in policymaking (Johnson 2009).

Contracting is an arrangement where a legal agreement is established to govern an exchange between two or more parties. Arms-length or boilerplate contracts generally do not fit the description of collaboration or collaborative governance. Although they imply a level of ‘jointness,’ the terms of the contract may be pre-specified, leaving little room for negotiation or interaction among the contractual parties. However, some market-based contractual relationships do meet these conditions.⁴ A term used in the contracting literature to describe such contracts is ‘relational contracting’ (Milward and Provan 2006; Van Slyke 2009). Economists understand relational contracting to be a form of ‘incomplete contract,’ which requires the contractual parties to specify the details as needed. As a more open-ended and adaptive form of contracting, relational contracts tend to depend on trust and long-term relationships.

While some contracts are collaborative in nature, not all contracting regimes are multilateral and deliberative in nature. For example, an agency might have a wide range of bilateral contracts with private firms or non-profits. Each of these contracts may be a form of relational contracting entailing intense interaction and joint decision making. Hence, we could say that individual contracts are collaborative. However, at a collective level, these bilateral contracts do not allow or require any multilateral deliberation among the parties—in other words, this regime encompasses many parties, but is not self-governed by a collective, multilateral and deliberative decision making process. Although such arrangements would meet the Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh criteria that collaboration is the ‘prevailing pattern,’ it would not meet the more restrictive Ansell and Gash definition. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that contracting regimes often do develop collective, multilateral and deliberative decision making processes (e.g. Agranoff 2014; Milward and Provan 2003).

Commissioning refers to the strategic steering of service design and delivery. Bovaird (2016) describes a range of modalities for commissioning depending on how the commissioning and provider sides are organized. The discussion of the collaborative character of these modalities follows the discussion of

contracting. Some modalities of commissioning imply prescribed contracts. Other modalities of commissioning are understood to increase competition at the cost of collaboration (Rees 2014). In some cases, commissioning comes close to co-production, involving citizens in the assessment of the need for services and in the design of those services. In the U.K., where the practice of strategic commissioning has been most fully developed, some examples of commissioning make explicit reference to collaboration, though it does not appear to be a major theme of this practice (Bovaird, Briggs, and Willis 2014).

The term *co-production* is used to describe the involvement of third sector organizations or citizens in the delivery of services. Although co-production has a long history, it has recently become much more prominent as a strategy. The term covers a range of relationships. However, the relationships that might be properly described as collaborative are those where third sector organizations or citizens engage with public agencies in decisions about public services or the design of those services (Verschuere, Brandsen, and Pestoff 2012). The distinction between cooperation, coordination and collaboration developed by Keast, Brown, and Mandell is relevant here. For example, a common form of co-production is where parents participate in the operation of childcare. In a number of European countries, childcare is organized as a cooperative where parents have an obligation to contribute in-kind services, hence limiting autonomy to some degree (Pestoff 2006). In some cases, parents may be simply fulfilling a specific assigned task. The relationship may be cooperative or coordinative, but it requires limited interaction or joint activity. In other cases, however, parents may be directly involved in making decisions about how a childcare facility is run. Pestoff refers to this role as ‘co-governance,’ and notes that “[c]o-governance requires real input and influence in the development of a sector or provision of welfare services” (Pestoff 2006: 516). In such cases, co-production may entail a far more multilateral and deliberative process.

Co-management is similar to co-production, but Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh use the term to describe situations where public services are delivered through a form of a public–private partnership where third sector organizations often play a prominent role (Brandsen and Hout 2006). The term is most extensively used in the field of natural resource management, particularly with respect to the co-management of common property resources like local fisheries. In such cases, co-management typically refers to a situation where the state manages a natural resource in conjunction with local communities and resource users. Carlsson and Berkes note that these co-management relationships may range along “...a continuum from the simple exchange of information to formal partnership” (Carlson and Berkes 2005: 66).

Public–private partnerships (PPPs) are often understood to be important forms of cross-sectoral collaboration. The term, however, refers to a “broad

church of many families” and its relationship with concepts like contracting and privatization is ambiguous (Hodge and Greve 2007: 548).⁵ Building on a definition first put forward by Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), Dickinson and Glasby argue that partnership entails:

...negotiation between people from different agencies committed to working together over more than the short term; aims to secure the delivery of benefits or added value which could not have been provided by any single agency acting alone or through the employment of others; and includes a formal articulation of a purpose and a plan to bind partners together. (Dickinson and Glasby 2010: 815)

As this description suggests, partnerships may be interpreted as contractual, but typically not narrowly contractual, and some scholars suggest that partnership arrangements may differ in kind from contractual relationships. Shaw argues that “[t]he trust [inherent in collaborative partnerships] is described as a covenant, in contrast to a contract; a contract focuses on meeting the interests of each party, whereas a covenant includes the higher purpose of achieving a goal” (Shaw 2003: 110).

Certification systems often (but not necessarily) take the form of cross-sectoral (public and private) ‘multi-stakeholder’ initiatives.⁶ Moog, Spicer, and Böhm describe these multi-stakeholder initiatives as follows:

MSIs bring together a range of stakeholders from different sectors, including representatives from corporations, NGOs, governmental organizations, and academic institutions. They are self-governing, generating their own procedures and institutions, rather than being directly controlled by a higher-level institution, such as a particular state, international organization or corporation. (Moog, Spicer, and Böhm 2015: 472)

This description fits the definitions of collaboration and collaborative governance described above. The stakeholders are autonomous and they work together in a multilateral, and presumably deliberative, fashion to jointly develop ‘shared rules, norms and structures.’ Note that this description draws on the image of collaboration as self-governance (image four).

Although Moog, Spicer, and Böhm’s (2015) description is largely aligned with definitions of collaborative governance, certification initiatives may be entirely private affairs. In fact, they are notable for creating a form of private authority and regulation (Cashore 2002). By contrast, the Ansell and Gash (2008) definition indicates that collaborative governance occurs where public agencies engage non-state stakeholders and the definition associates collaborative governance with public policy decision making and management. However, this criteria is arguably too restrictive.

In summary, although we can say that all six governance arrangements identified by Kekez, Howlett, and Ramesh are collaborative in the sense that they may bridge across public, private and civic sectors, these arrangements may also vary in terms of how much they meet the standards of collaboration and collaborative governance. In some cases, and despite their cross-sectoral nature, these collaborative governance arrangements may not be particularly collaborative. In other cases, they certainly are. Clarity about the criteria being used to describe them as collaborative or as forms of collaborative governance can help us avoid unwarranted ‘conceptual stretching’ (Collier and Mahon 1993; O’Leary and Vij 2012: 517).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to critically examine the concepts of collaboration and collaborative governance as used in the fields of public administration, political science, and policy studies. Social science concepts operate in complex overlapping semantic fields (or, as some might say, ‘Wittgensteinian language games’) that grow up organically as scholars and practitioners press them into service. Rarely can they fit into neat classical definitional hierarchies that everyone agrees upon. However, that does not mean that we should throw up our hands or say ‘anything goes.’ It helps if a scholarly community has some appreciation of how the meanings of concepts are anchored in particular conversations and how they develop in contrast to other concepts.

To provide some appreciation for how the terms ‘collaboration’ and ‘collaborative governance’ operate in complex semantic fields and how their meanings have been shaped by different concerns and contrasting ideals, this chapter introduced eight different ‘images of collaboration.’ I do not claim that these eight images are either comprehensive or mutually exclusive, but they do begin to suggest how the terms ‘collaboration’ and ‘collaborative governance’ are anchored in somewhat different but overlapping scholarly debates. For example, while some discussions contrast collaboration with hierarchical forms of organization, others contrast it with market-based organization. Still others contrast collaboration with more conflictual or adversarial relationships. The point is not that one of these images is right and the others wrong. It is useful to recognize, however, that the dimensions they suggest may be different: collaboration versus hierarchy, collaboration versus market, and collaboration versus conflict are three different ways of giving meaning to the concept.

A second important point of the chapter is that it is useful to keep levels-of-analysis in mind. The term ‘collaboration’ can be used to describe a single dyadic relationship. In doing so, the focus is on the specific character of relationships and the term ‘collaboration’ might be being used to broadly

describe any non-hierarchical, cooperative relationship. However, it is also possible to take a more restrictive view, distinguishing collaboration from cooperation and coordination. This distinction rests on a judgment (relative and qualitative) about the degree of ‘jointness’ in the relationship. By this standard, collaboration entails the elaboration of joint decision making for joint outcomes. This standard of jointness also helps to clarify the relationship between collaboration and contracts. Since collaboration is often described as a negotiated (as opposed to a hierarchical) relationship, collaboration may be ‘contractual.’ While standard boilerplate or highly prescribed contracts leave little discretion for joint decision making, relational contracting may be more collaborative in nature.

While the term ‘collaboration’ can be used to describe a single dyadic relationship, the term ‘collaborative governance’ tends to refer to multi-stakeholder relationships. These relationships may be conceived of as a series of dyadic (bilateral) relationships, often centered around a single lead organization. However, governance typically refers to a more multilateral (or networked) situation. A somewhat restrictive ‘ideal typical’ understanding of collaborative governance envisions multiple stakeholders interacting and deliberating simultaneously around a negotiating table.

Finally, this volume examines six collaborative governance arrangements—consultation, contracting, commissioning co-production, co-management and certification. This chapter has examined how each of these governance arrangements may vary in the degree to which they meet the criteria used to identify collaborative relationships and collaborative governance regimes. Thus, the conclusion is that these ‘collaborative governance arrangements’ (defined as cross-sectoral arrangements) may be more or less collaborative at the relationship and regime levels.

NOTES

1. This definition builds on a definition advanced earlier by Wood and Gray: “Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (Wood and Gray 1991: 146).
2. In an article that prefigures the paper by Keast, Brown, and Mandell (2007), Mandell and Steelman (2003) distinguish between four types of interorganizational collaboration based on their temporal and structural features: intermittent coordination implies limited interaction and limited commitment; a temporary task force is an ad hoc arrangement set up to accomplish a specific time-delimited agenda; permanent or regular coordination occurs when organizations establish a formal and lasting arrangement to achieve some specific purpose; and a network structure is an institutional arrangement that develops a broader shared mission and requires greater commitment by the parties. They distinguish collaboration along six dimensions, including problem orientation, commitment to goals,

intensity of linkages, breadth of effort, complexity of purpose and scope of effort. These dimensions can arguably be collapsed into three more general dimensions: to what extent is the collaboration based on distributed or joint goals? Do members have more limited or more extensive interaction with one another as they collaborate? And how narrow or broad is the collaborative agenda itself? Collaborative arrangements vary from having distributed goals, limited interaction and narrow agendas to joint goals, extensive interaction and broad-based agendas. Arguably, the background concept for each of these dimensions ultimately refers to the degree of interdependence of autonomous actors.

3. They define collaborative governance as “the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished” (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012: 2).
4. It is worth pointing out that contractual parties are autonomous when they enter into a contract, since they do so voluntarily. However, once the contract is signed, they are bound by the contract which functions as a form of hierarchy. Indeed, contracts are often interpreted in principal-agent terms (Milward and Provan 2000).
5. Indeed, the meaning of ‘partnership’ is loose and Dickinson and Glasby (2010) suggest that its referents can range from hierarchical to network to market-based relationships. Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) distinguish a partnership from a network because at different stages, partnerships may be hierarchies, markets or networks. They argue that partnerships are networks during the phase of ‘pre-partnership collaboration’ and in a later phase of maintaining the partnership. While not all partnerships—or phases of partnerships—are collaborative, some more clearly are. Hodge and Greve (2007) argue that public-private partnerships have two dimensions: a financial dimension related to how each partner invests financially in the partnership and an organizational dimension that refers to the tight or loose organization of the partnership. For a broad discussion of the multiple meanings of the term ‘public-private partnership,’ see Linder (1999).
6. Certification systems are often, but not necessarily, multi-stakeholder initiatives. Government may develop certification processes organized in a more hierarchical fashion. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s certification systems for beef and organic foods are an example.