



Revista de Administração FACES Journal
ISSN: 1517-8900
ISSN: 1984-6975
faces@fumeec.br
Universidade FUMEC
Brasil

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Revista de Administração FACES Journal, vol. 18, núm. 3, 2019

Universidade FUMEC, Brasil

Disponível em: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=194062320007>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21714/1984-6975FACES2019V18N3ART6846>

Collaborative Governance: The Coordination of Governance Networks

Governança Colaborativa: A Coordenação das Redes de Governança

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Revista de Administração FACES
Journal, vol. 18, núm. 3, 2019

Universidade FUMEC, Brasil

Recepción: 13 Febrero 2019
Aprobación: 30 Septiembre 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21714/1984-6975FACES2019V18N3ART16846>

Redalyc: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=194062320007>

Abstract: Networks are increasingly used for a range of public benefits. However, little is known about the elements that constitute their governance. The present article aims to discuss the variables that constitute the governance of collaborative networks; how they interact; and why they are relevant. The results point to an analytical model in which governance is composed of the elements that exist prior to the formation of the networks, the existence of shared principles and operationalized by their procedural, structural, and relational components. Confidence is the overarching element needed for its development and learning, with the aim of achieving the expected result.

Keywords: Governanc, Collaborative governance, Coordinatio Network, Governance networks.

Resumo: As redes são utilizadas cada vez mais para o alcance de bens públicos. Contudo, pouco se sabe sobre os elementos que compõem a sua governança. Nesse sentido, o presente artigo tem como objetivo discutir quais são as variáveis que compõem a governança das redes colaborativas; como elas interagem; e porque são relevantes. Os resultados apontam para um modelo analítico em que a governança é composta pelos antecedentes à formação das redes, pela existência de princípios compartilhados e operacionalizada pelos seus componentes processual, estrutural e relacional. Tendo a confiança como elemento transversal da sua evolução e aprendizado, objetivando o alcance do resultado esperado.

Palavras-chave: Governança, Governança colaborativa, Coordenação Redes, Redes de governança.

Introduction

Increasingly frequent partnerships and networks among governments, civil society organizations, companies, and other organizations are a global phenomenon in a context marked by greater social fragmentation, complexity, and dynamism. According to Sorensen and Torfing (2007), these features are related to the proliferation of relatively independent public and private organizations that seek to represent multiple actors, with their different understandings and identities. These actors demand solutions based on expertise that bring different forms of reasoning, procedures, strategies, and institutions to the discussion. These aspects necessarily lead to greater interaction among them, increasing the chance for conflicts, uncertainties, and risks.

It is widely understood in the literature that conflicts, uncertainties, and risks are endemic to networks and that reducing their impact requires the establishment of a set of instruments that makes it possible to coordinate the actors involved (PARKER, 2007; SØRENSEN and TORFING, 2009; PROVAN and LEMAIRE, 2012; ROTH et al., 2012). However, despite the growth in the volume of the literature on network governance, referred to here as collaborative governance, the content is still highly fragmented. In general, research on the subject primarily consists of case studies in particular sectors or is focused on specific constituent elements of collaborative governance such as participation, effectiveness, and democracy, among others (MOLIN and MASELLA, 2015).

To fill this gap, Molin and Masella (2015) create a model composed of four major blocks: the initial conditions; the modes of network governance; metagovernance; and outcome evaluation. Governance of the network itself would be what they term metagovernance, defined as “the efforts of public authorities in steering networks through a different set of rules or other strategies and it represents the way in which networks are empirically governed” (p. 499). This understanding casts the state in the leading role, by reason of its capacity to define the legal regulations that govern organizations, mediate the dialogue among actors, resolve disputes, and define the strategic context in which actors must act. According to Vangen et al., (2015), however, this understanding of the state as the leading actor in the coordination of networks is only one of the possible interpretations of the role that the state should play in the arrangement. According to Bryson et al., (2014), the role of government agencies in networks should be that of organizers, catalysts, and collaborators, sometimes leading, at other times aligning themselves or creating alliances, and sometimes even staying out of the arrangement, to manage the public interest. In other words, the state does not necessarily play the leading role at all times. In some cases, for example, coordination is performed by other partners, whereas the state merely opens space for the formation of the network but does not participate in the implementation phase itself (MILAGRES et al., 2017).

Despite the different opinions and considerations concerning the appropriate degree of centralization and state control in networks, there is an undeniable increase in the number of networks formed among governments, civil society, businesses, and other organizations. This movement is reflected in the greater number of reports and studies of different experiences throughout the world, which justifies a broad debate over how to govern this coordination (KLIJN and SKELCHER, 2007). To contribute to this discussion, the present article aims to discuss and understand the elements that should be considered in the governance structure of collaborative networks. Specifically, it seeks to identify the variables that constitute collaborative governance. How do they interact? Why are they relevant?

In addressing these questions through a review of the literature, this study contributes to the literature by presenting a framework that

considers the academic literature on the subject published between 2000 and 2014 in journals in the fields of public administration/political science and organizational theory indexed in the EBSCO database. Moreover, it proposes a starting point for public and private sector managers who are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the subject and may even assist them in their operations.

This article is organized as follows: the first section lays out the methodology; subsequently, the bibliographic framework and main findings of the research are presented; a discussion of the results follows, with a view to creating a model of collaborative governance; then, the article concludes with final considerations.

METHODOLOGY

To understand how the topic has been discussed over the years, a literature search was started, focusing on understanding the essential concepts, their components, and the development of this topic as a field of study.

The first stage consisted of a search in the EBSCO database, exclusively focused on articles published in journals related to public administration and/or political science using the search terms "Governance," "Network," and "Collaboration." The search was refined to include only complete articles published between 2000 and 2014 in academic journals in the field of public administration that noted the topic of network governance in the article's abstract. The search found 1,546 entries that matched the criteria described. After duplicates were eliminated, the number fell to 960 articles.

In the second phase of the study, the abstracts were read, and articles were excluded if they addressed topics unrelated to the goals of this study, such as social network analysis, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public-private partnerships (PPPs), political networks, exponential random graph models (ERGM), and the relationship between public administration and democracy. At the end of this stage, 57 articles remained.

A detailed reading of the 57 articles was followed by seminars in which the three researchers discussed each article, their central elements, and the interrelationship among them. Several texts were discarded as irrelevant during this stage, leaving 42 articles as the basis for analysis.

The 42 articles chosen were published in journals recognized for their quality. A complete list of the articles organized by journal is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Number of articles by journal – Public Administration

Journal	Number of articles
Public Administration Review	15
Public Administration	7
Public Management Review	5
Public Performance & Management Review	4
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	3
The Australian Journal of Public Administration	2
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	1
Urban Studies	1
International Journal of Public Sector Management	1
International Public Management Journal	1
The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal	1
Administration & Society	1

Prepared by the authors

During the second year of the survey, the same research methodology and categorization of articles were applied to the field of organizational theory. The same criteria were used, and of the 1,328 articles initially found, only 52 were added to the group analyzed the previous year. A complete list of the articles organized by journal is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of articles by journal – Organizational Theory

Journal	Number of articles
Strategic Management Journal	13
Academy of Management Review	8
Academy of Management Journal	8
Long Range Planning	7
Journal of Management Studies	5
Organization Science	3
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	2
California Management Review	2
Journal of Management	1
Organization Studies	1
Academy of Management Perspectives	1
Management and Organization Review	1

Prepared by the authors

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the selected articles by year. Although no pattern emerges in any of the areas that would permit the identification of a trend with regard to the theme, we can observe a greater concentration of the articles chosen in certain years (2006, 2008, 2009 e 2012).

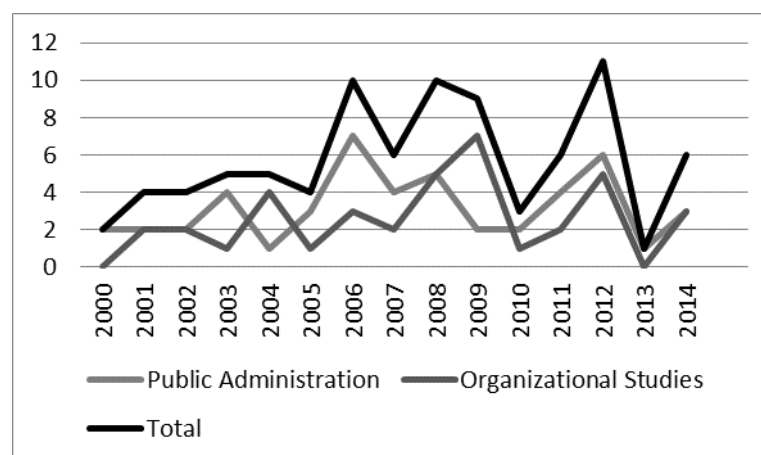


Figure 1
Distribution of selected articles by year
Prepared by the authors

The discussions among the three researchers concentrated on systematizations, analysis, insights, and an analytical model of collaborative governance. However, it is worth noting that although the proposal may seem conclusive, it represents only an inventory of the analytical variables on the topic. It makes no claim to being a definitive discussion of this topic. Moreover, the construction of a model is always reductive because although it facilitates understanding of the phenomenon, it is not capable of working out or elaborating all possible variations that reality presents. If, on the one hand, it focuses on ease of understanding, then the model can become simplistic; if, on the other hand, it attempts to approach the complexity of reality, then it becomes unwieldy and unintelligible. Its construction, therefore, reflects one possible reading, specific to the author, who chooses a single representation from among numerous possibilities of reality. In addition, a model is almost always prescriptive, given that it indicates paths and interpretations; furthermore, its deductions typically still lack empirical evidence. The latter is an important fact in the world of networks in the public sphere.

In this sense, the reader should be warned that despite understanding the dangers above, the authors of this article, in addition to others (examples could include BRYSON et al., 2006; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012), venture to present a possible model that aims to contribute to the understanding of collaborative governance. These systematizations make it possible to empirically test the variables listed, reformulate the propositions set out, and implement them in nascent and established networks.

The next section presents the main concepts and findings that served as the basis for the construction of the analytical model proposed.

Theoretical Framework – Collaborative Governance

Collaborative governance refers to the set of tools that makes it possible to coordinate the actors involved in networks. It is also the result of a bargaining process among the organizations that participate in the network and, consequently, among their managers, each considering the benefits of cooperation in achieving collective and individual objectives. It includes a set of decision-making and control processes that make it possible to implement the policies. It involves the exercise of power and authority but, even more so, the exercise of influence and negotiation. It sets rules, standards, processes, routines, and other procedures that establish the limits of autonomy, the division of responsibilities, and the bases for sharing resources and results, among other aspects related to the network's operation. It employs different types of institutions to ensure the coordination and implementation of the activities shared by the partners (ROTH et al., 2012).

This set of formal or informal rules, procedures, and standards develops over time through a process of incremental learning, as the actors revise their perception of "the problem," their identities, and the very structure of governance. In other words, it is a changing structure, which can vary with the surrounding context and with changes in the perceptions of its constituent agents. On the other hand, this governance structure also influences the action of its components.

The complexity of the relationships among the actors requires that new processes be established to mediate the relations among people and organizations, which demands changes in the behavior of agents. That is, they may act differently if they are acting alone in their organizations. Moreover, it requires the use of information and communication technology to organize the information circulating among actors and institutions. The availability and exchange of information, it is worth noting, are perceived as crucial to the smooth functioning of the network. It also requires performance management models to monitor the individual and group activities that will shape the intended result. This requirement makes it necessary to involve people who, in addition to bringing resources to the network, are skilled in negotiating, coordinating, and facilitating processes (PARKER, 2007).

Unlike traditional forms of governance, collaborative governance involves decision-making processes that are not necessarily hierarchical but that promote the interaction and empowerment of those involved. In this sense, they may be more effective, given that this greater involvement ensures not only commitment but also better-designed solutions to the problems faced. From the perspective of the state, changes are observed not so much in the content of policies as in the manner in which they are implemented.

The analysis of the literature leads to the conclusion that, in general, the discussion can be classified into three major groups. One group focuses on the prior conditions and, specifically, their influence in the decision to form networks and the impact of this element on the networks'

development and structure of governance. Another group studies the contractual and structural aspects found in the network. Finally, another group concentrates on the processes and instruments that constitute the governance of networks.

Prior conditions

In studies that focus on prior conditions, the discussion addresses the elements that influence the establishment of the network, such as the political and regulatory aspects. These studies also include debates about actors' perception of their level of interdependence, complementarity of resources, and risk-sharing. They can also include the prior history among members, pre-existing levels of trust and conflict, and other factors. Table 3 shows these elements and others discussed by the authors.

Table 3
Prior conditions

ELEMENT	COMPONENTS	AUTHORS
Prior Conditions	Political, Legal, Socioeconomic, Environmental, Regulatory, and Technological Elements	Emerson et al. 2012.
	Degree of Interdependence and Complementarity of Resources	Thomson and Perry 2006; Emerson et al. 2012.
	Risk-Sharing	Cummings and Holmberg 2012
	Prior History among Members, Pre-Existing Levels of Trust and Conflict	Bryson et al. 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Emerson et al. 2012.
	Experience Working in Collaborative Networks	Larson 1992.
	Degree of Acceptance / Legitimacy	Healey 2004; Gonzalez and Healey 2005.
	Selection of Partners	Huxham 2003; Saz-Carranza and Vernis 2006; Bierly and Gallagher 2007; Holmberg and Cummings, 2009; Emerson et al. 2012.

Prepared by the authors

If this conjunction of factors leads to the establishment of a network, then it becomes necessary to structure the interactions among actors to ensure its functioning. This process includes the network's structure, processes, contract, and other intangible elements that constitute a set of mechanisms/tools for coordination and control (HUXHAM, 2003).

Formal structure

With regard to its formal structure, collaborative governance is composed of contracts and the definition of its coordination structure. Table 4 shows the authors who study this issue.

Table 4
Collaborative governance – Structure and Contracts

Contracts	Aggarwal et al. 2011; Miller and Devers 2012.
Structure	Provan and Kenis 2005.

Prepared by the authors

It is known, however, that the establishment of contracts and structure does not, in and of itself, guarantee cooperation. To these must be added different processes that develop through the daily interactions among those involved, through recurrent cycles of renegotiation. They are also affected by personal relationships, psychological contracts, understandings, and informal commitments that develop over the course of the network's evolution (THOMSON and PERRY, 2006).

Processes

The processes that constitute collaborative governance can be viewed as mechanisms developed for the day-to-day operation of the networks. They are composed of different tools, such as routines that are improvised or deliberate, formal or informal, rigid or flexible, permanent or transitory. They may arise from agreements established by contract or born of necessity to function in an integrated manner. Some argue that they act as mediators between contract and performance (NIELSEN, 2010). Others (DOZ, 1996; LARSON, 1992; RING and VAN DE VEN, 1994) claim that as trust and familiarity among actors deepen, these mechanisms are refined and become very important in the functioning of collaborative networks. Table 5 shows the processes listed in the literature and the authors who discuss them.

Table 5
Collaborative Governance – Processes

Administration	Provan and Kenis 2005; Agranoff 2006; Bryson et al. 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Weber and Khademian 2008; Schreiner et al. 2009; Emerson et al. 2012; Osborne and Stokosch 2013; Kumar 2014.
Leadership	Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Feldman and Khademian 2002; Saz-Caranza and Vernis 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Weber and Khademian 2008; McGuire and Silvia 2009; Whelan 2011; Hogg et al. 2012; Shepherd and Meehan 2012.
Mutuality / Construction of Legitimacy	Hardy et al. 2003; Kenis and Provan 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Emerson et al. 2012; Grundinschi et al. 2013.
Confidence-Building	Connelly et al. 2012; Emerson et al. 2012; Oomsels and Bouckaert 2014.
Control and Outcome Evaluation	Klijn and Koppenjan 2000; Provan and Milward 2001; Soda et al. 2004; Koka et al. 2006; Saz-Carranza and Vernis 2006; Callahan 2007; Bryson et al. 2006; Koontz and Thomas 2006; Koppenjan 2008; Lunnan and Haugland 2008; Mandell and Keast 2008; Provan and Kenis 2008; Weber and Khademian 2008; Lindencrona et al. 2009; McGuire and Silvia 2009; Ness 2009; Sorensen and Torfing 2009; Aggarwal et al. 2011; Whelan, 2011; Kumar 2014; Rahman and Korn 2014.

Prepared by the authors

The discussion now turns to the elements found in the literature with the aim of creating an analytical model for collaborative governance. The authors emphasize that they recognize the limitations of models. Nevertheless, they assume the risks and understand them to be part of the process of scientific production. In other words, the construction of models helps empirically test the variables cited, reformulate propositions, and implement practical applications.

Discussion

Based on the findings in the literature, collaborative governance is influenced by prior conditions. That is, contextual elements (EMERSON et al., 2012) influence the actors who will compose the network, both in their decision to form the network and in how it is structured. Thus, aspects such as the history of relationships, the actors' degree of familiarity with each other and with networking (SAZ-CARRANZA, 2006; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006), the existence of leadership and confidence, the level of prior conflict, and the perception of the interdependence of resources (WEBER and KADHEMINA, 2008; EMERSON et al. 2012), among others, are aspects to be considered in both the decision to form a network and the design of its governance.

Once the decision has been made to form a network and it has been ascertained that some principles exist (interdependence, risk-sharing, complementarity of resources and common objectives), or at least that there is willingness to build them, the actual process

of structuring the collaborative governance begins. This process is composed of contractual governance, in which the formal elements of the partners' coordination are laid out. The contract is one of these formal elements and contains rules, standards, and clauses that establish boundaries, responsibilities, and rights (HUXHAN, 2003; PROVAN and KENIS, 2005; BRYSON et al., 2006). The coordination structure is another element, establishing duties and methods and specifying who is responsible for managing/coordinating the network (THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; AGRANOFF, 2006).

In addition to the contractual aspect, there is procedural governance, which includes the various processes and instruments by which the network's day-to-day operations are managed. Among those discussed in the literature, several are highlighted here: the process establishing how communication occurs aims to provide informational symmetry, restricting opportunistic behavior (BRYSON et al., 2006; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; SCHEREINER et al., 2009; WHELAN, 2011); management of the conflicts that occur in any network composed of multiple actors with different world views and different cultures (BRYSON et al., 2006; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; WHELAN, 2011); the evolution of objectives, which may have coincided when the network was established but may require renegotiation as the network matures and the context changes (KALE, 2006; KOPPENJAN, 2008; MANDELL and KEAST, 2008; KLIJN and KOPPENJAN, 2009; MCGUIRE and SILVIA, 2009; KUMAR, 2014); and the decision-making process, which may not require unanimity but should favor consensus and balance in the exercise of authority, as the actors have different degrees of power and status (AGRANOFF, 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012); in this sense, it should favor balance and seek to establish horizontal relationships among the partners (PROVAN and KENIS, 2005).

Based on these aspects, an important element that warrants observation is the leadership process. As a key element in collaborative environments, the influence of leadership is felt at all different stages. Before the network is formed, capable leaders are needed to align interests and agreements, seek out and gain the cooperation of necessary partners, and sometimes lend their credibility and reputation to create the required pre-conditions (BRYSON et al., 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012). Throughout the existence of the network, these actors are called on to perform numerous ongoing tasks that require a broad range of skills and, in particular, an understanding that leadership in collaborative environments is transitory and shared (WEBER and KHADEMIAN, 2008; HOGG et al., 2012; KUMAR, 2014). It derives not from hierarchical structures but rather from the recognition of skill at solving specific problems related to the network's goals or from the ability of leaders to create an environment that is suited to collaboration. They are also responsible for establishing the network's legitimacy, both internally with their partners and externally with society (BRYSON et al., 2006). It is therefore necessary to differentiate among

the network leader (who is responsible for creating an environment in which collaboration flourishes), the network manager/coordinator (who is in charge of the operation of the various processes), and the network's legal representatives, politicians, or sponsors (who support and sometimes lay the groundwork for its existence and who, despite having the power to impose decisions, refrain from doing so, in recognition of the importance and power of solutions arrived at jointly among partners) (FELDMAN and KHADEMIAN, 2002; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; WEBER and KHADEMIAN, 2008; WHELAN, 2011; SHEPHERD and MEEHAN, 2012). The leader can take on different functions but must be able to differentiate among the roles to be played in each.

Therefore, the complexity of this environment requires the presence of a third component in the composition of collaborative governance, which is relational governance. This aspect is composed of a set of elements that work with intangibles: (1) network identity – shaped by symbolic and cognitive elements – statements, signs, established and perceived values, codes, understandings, and concepts (HARDY et al., 2003); (2) psychological contracts – unwritten expectations and assumptions that guide the relationship (RING and VAN DE VEN, 1994; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006); (3) the collective vision, which includes the objectives to be achieved, motivated by beliefs and ideological positions (THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012; GRUNDINSCHI et al., 2013); (4) the sense of justice, belonging, and acceptance; and (5) the creation of a safe environment in which resources, information, and knowledge can be shared (SAZ-CARRANZA and VERNIS, 2006).

The separation between relational governance and procedural governance has nothing to do with any inability to create instruments or processes for its construction and management. On the contrary, a more detailed reading of procedural governance reveals this intention in its various components. Some authors even point to the processes of confidence-building (BRYSON et al., 2006; KALE, 2009), for example, and focus on understanding how these are related to the processes of control and to the contract (DAS and TENG, 2001; KRISHNA et al., 2006; FAEMS et al., 2008; PURANAM and VANNESTE, 2009; CONNELLY et al., 2012; MALHOTRA and LUMINEAU, 2011). Here, the cut-off criterion concerns the ability of the items that constitute relational governance to decisively contribute to the construction of an environment in which collaboration occurs and to achieving the important goal of generating a collaborative surplus. This is defined as the actors' openness to establishing new networks with partners or others. The reason is that they realize that this type of arrangement contributes to the solution of complex problems. In addition, their experience with past agreements leads them to realize that they have become familiar with working collaboratively. In other words, they have developed the necessary skills for networking because networking relies on the development of alternative forms of management and

coordination. This outcome is crucial, given that reaching the desired outcomes requires overcoming the challenges and learning the details of this type of arrangement.

Collaborative surplus and the creation of an environment that fosters collaboration are related to the perception that, over time, the participants' interests and specific objectives have been respected. This is true even if these have been considered secondary to the network's objectives. It is the product of consensus-building, which results from the creation of spaces for dialogue in which different views and interpretations of the world have been discussed and negotiated (THOMSON and PERRY, 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012).

The perception of interdependence and the importance of each partner's participation, whether in designing solutions, producing consensus and common understandings or contributing to the network's outcomes, pave the way for creating a feeling of belonging and acceptance. This perception must be fostered and continually reinforced. Therefore, spaces for dialogue and negotiation must be created in which daily accomplishments, regardless of how small, are commemorated. Here, leadership and constant communication are crucial because they diminish opportunistic behaviors and mistrust and promote mutual trust. It is particularly worth highlighting that communication requires not only the establishment of formal channels but also, even more importantly, the creation of a common language, shaped by shared codes, understandings, perceptions, and concepts (HARDY et al., 2006).

Another important element is the mechanisms established for the resolution of conflicts, such as processes, standards, rules, and contractual clauses (BRYSON et al., 2006). The willingness to relinquish personal understandings and goals is tied to the potential gains of working in partnership, and it is necessary to ensure that all participants feel that they are treated fairly (PORRAS et al., 2004; THOMSON and PERRY, 2006). These processes also allow initial expectations to be revised, reformulated, and adapted and open opportunities for the creation of psychological contracts, which take on an important role in establishing behaviors.

The development of a collective vision, shaped by shared beliefs and ideologies and built on ongoing renegotiation, is relevant to the creation of an ideal that unites those involved. There is also a need to create an environment based on a common and shared sense of direction (HARDY et al., 2006). In this sense, building team spirit is essential. This aspect arises from different aspects that constitute governance, particularly from the establishment of an identity, in which statements that promote collaboration and established and perceived values support the behavior of actors in pursuit of the network's goals.

Permeating the components of relational governance is trust. Trust provides the backdrop against which a collaborative environment can emerge. To that end, there must be trust in the reliability and ability of partners to perform as expected (SAZ-CARANZA and VERNIS, 2006) that opens space for the construction of the imaginary and cognitive

symbolism that is necessary to form psychological contracts and shared visions (THOMSON and PERRY, 2006).

Many authors argue that trust is crucial to collaborative environments because it significantly influences the collaborative governance established. In the absence of trust[1], for example, formal agreements and contracts play a more important role in both control and coordination. Trust also shapes the type of coordination structure established. As proposed by PROVAN and KENIS (2008), limited trust requires centralized networks. With regard to procedural governance, trust facilitates actors' performance of their day-to-day functions because they believe that others will keep their promises, be sufficiently competent to achieve the objectives set, and act benevolently when contingencies arise. Beyond what is proposed in the literature, the authors add here that trust is an important support element, forming the background that supports the establishment of relational governance.

This is the locus at which contracts, structures, processes, and instruments converge to support the construction of the environment in which collaborative work will be performed. The combination of elements of contractual and procedural governance, supported by the construction and reaffirmation of trust, opens space for the creation of psychological contracts, beliefs, identity, shared vision, etc. The reason is that the formation of clear, tangible structures reduces the uncertainties inherent to the coexistence of multiple actors from different contexts. Simultaneously, because these are formed over time, guided by the learning that accumulates as the network develops and matures, they are by nature incomplete and thus ensure the flexibility that is necessary to build an environment that is suited to collaboration.

The final group to be considered in the proposed model refers to the principles that must be observed. These are intangibles that are inherent to the functioning of networks: (1) the perception of interdependence – partners join to form a network because they recognize that the result will be achieved only by combining their available resources or they are fully aware of their inability to reach their goals alone; (2) the convergence of objectives – this is the product of recurrent rounds of negotiation and is an element that keeps the network alive; in its absence, the arrangement crumbles; (3) awareness of autonomy – although they have entered a collaborative arrangement, partners are autonomous organizations, with different and legitimate interests; and (4) the perception of reciprocity – the participants commit to the network only if they trust each other or suspend their mistrust. In other words, actors will participate in the network only if they observe that everyone will act as expected (BRYSON et al., 2006; THONSON and PERRY, 2006; EMERSON et al., 2012). These principles will influence and be influenced by every development of the network, including its governance and outcomes. This is an interactive cycle in which the early stages of the maturation of these principles shapes the components of collaborative governance; on the other hand, they are affected and readjusted by the implementation of these components.

Therefore, collaborative governance evolves and emerges gradually, reflecting the outcome of an ongoing process of learning-by-doing that originates with the actors' fluid perceptions of problems and solutions as well as of themselves and their partners.

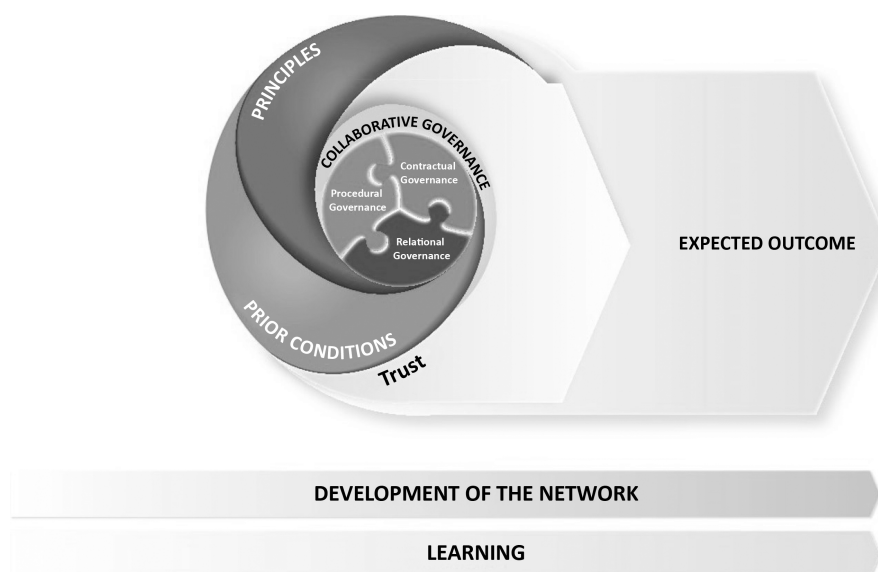


Figure 2
Analytical Model of Collaborative Governance
Prepared by the authors

It is worth emphasizing, however, that the balance among the three components of governance – contractual, procedural, and relational – is crucial, not trivial. A governance that heavily relies on the contractual aspect, which may result from unfavorable prior conditions such as a past history of conflicts and distrust, may translate into control-laden processes and, consequently, inhibit the flourishing of trust and a collaborative environment. Highly centralized, self-sufficient, and autonomous structures may limit the participation of partners and, as a result, fail to create spaces for the emergence of principles based on collaboration, such as participants' commitment to defining and executing tasks. Rigid processes can hinder the establishment of a collaborative environment and, consequently, the achievement of the expected results. This can occur when such processes are unable to keep pace with the development of psychological contracts, renegotiation along the way, and the production of new consensus and understandings. Examples of rigid processes include the establishment of strictly defined outcomes that merely define goals without considering the route taken to achieve them and bureaucratic communication processes that ignore the importance of uniform access and compartmentalize information.

On the other hand, loosely defined processes can lead to lack of commitment. That is, if they perceive that contributions are not being measured, partners dedicate less time to the network. Worse yet, they may feel disadvantaged, which damages their perception of fairness. Inadequate control systems may cause mistakes to be overlooked and go uncorrected, leading to a loss of the network's internal and external

legitimacy. In other words, balance is crucial. In addition, because networks are arrangements that develop gradually and operate in a changing environment, openness and flexibility to analyze and adapt to indicators along the way are important.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As society changes and different paradigms take hold, the state faces new challenges. Currently, the limits of the state's performance are being debated again. Many argue that the state is unable to solve a number of problems of contemporary society. Although this debate is not new, having been the center of discussion in various eras, some nuances warrant being highlighted.

We have observed a growing number of studies that seek to understand how collaborative strategies can respond to complex problems in contemporary society. These studies indicate several points, among which is the fact that networking cannot be viewed as a panacea, a solution applicable to all cases. Instead, some specific details must be observed, such as prior conditions that are favorable or unfavorable to the viability of network formation. Others believe that certain areas of state activity, such as taxation, do not lend themselves to the formation of networks (TORFING, 2012). An analytical overview of these studies, however, allows us to assert that no definitive evidence exists proving that this method is more effective or ensures the best results. We still lack comparative studies, consensus among the various concepts applied, and data that permit the generalization of results, conclusions, etc. Nevertheless, one can say that the governance structure is a central feature of a network, recognized as influencing the network's ability to achieve the objectives established.

This justifies greater commitment from public administrators to understanding the operation of these networks, particularly their governance structure. To contribute to this understanding, we list some points that warrant attention.

Evidence for Practice

1. An understanding of the specific details of a network's governance significantly contributes to achieving the desired results. Particularly in relation to outcomes, attention should be paid to broadening the customarily used indicators. It is important to go beyond monitoring and measuring the specific objectives established by a network to assess how the outcomes match the interests of different stakeholders, their level of satisfaction, and their involvement with those who directly participate in the network's governance.
2. Contrary to popular assumption, the relations in collaborative environments are marked by conflict, making the promotion

- of a collaborative environment crucial because this affects whether the desired results will be achieved. Therefore, it is important to establish criteria by which intermediate results and the network's intangible elements can be measured. In other words, it is important to assess the network's capacity to generate collaborative surplus and the political costs involved.
3. It is worth considering that although many advocate the establishment of networks involving civil society as a means of promoting the democratization of relations between governments and citizens, there is neither consensus nor empirical evidence to support this view. More recent studies even point to cases that contradict this statement. They claim that relations have not changed but rather that power has shifted from traditional government forums to the arena of the network. According to this evidence, politicians have taken over this space as an arena for promoting individual agendas (BLOCK and PAREDIS 2013).
 4. However, if it is true that the state tends to use collaborative networks to deliver certain public goods and services, it is crucial that it understand the intricacies of governance. Therefore, it is important that the accumulated learning dispersed among different branches of government be stored. This makes it necessary to systematize and organize the information and experiences of the different branches of government involved in collaborative networks. Thus, information about partners, records of past experience, and the ability to read the context can help determine where, when, how, and why to form networks. The wording of contracts, the analysis of what, when, and under which circumstances structures are most appropriate, the design of processes and instruments, and the recording and analysis of the elements that constitute relational governance can facilitate the experience, learning, and improvement of future network experiences.

As noted above, networks are perceived as arrangements that favor horizontal relationships, in which hierarchy is replaced by the search for consensus and shared leadership. However, the state is an institution whose power and status do not lend themselves to breaking with hierarchy. In addition, many government agencies are highly bureaucratic and politicized. Therefore, the following question may be asked: how can expectations of more horizontal relationships be reconciled with structures that bear these characteristics? In addition, leadership in a network is viewed as transitory and shared. Are public administrators trained to work in contexts with these characteristics? If leadership is transitory and based on knowledge and skills that are specific to solving the various problems that arise over the network's life, then what should the attitude and actions of state representatives be? The answers to these questions were not the goal of this study and may not yet be formulated.

This is a point that warrants the attention of public administrators involved in networks and indicates an important direction for future studies.

References

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Notes

- 1 It should be emphasized that contrary to the common assumption, the absence of trust is not the same as distrust. Distrust is understood as the intentional and deliberate refusal to make oneself vulnerable through trust, stemming from negative expectations based on the prior behavior of the one requesting trust (OOMSELS; BOUCKAERT, 2014). The absence of trust can be merely a neutral position, neither trusting nor distrustful.