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Smart hybridity: Potentials and challenges of new governance arrangements

Joop Koppenjan, Philip Marcel Karré and Katrien Termeer (Illinois, Chicago: Eleven International Publishing; 2019; ISBN: 978-9-462368-93-4; 176 pp; \$49.00)

Societal changes as evidenced in so-called ‘wicked problems’ have become all the more salient in recent times. Traditional governance approaches, which include hierarchy, markets, networks and societal self-governance, are ill-equipped to face the following challenges: regional economic development, urban renewal, social inequality, sustainability, climate change, integral youth care, the ageing workforce in the public services sector, economic growth, the development of future-proof infrastructure and crises. These technically difficult matters require specific knowledge but there is a lack of consensus about how to tackle them, which also makes them complicated at the social level. Such societal issues call for appropriate governance but traditional public administration – characterised by hierarchy, bureaucracy through organisation, and representative democracy – has led to ‘the decline of poor governance and corruption’.

New Public Management (NPM) promised ‘increased efficiency and transparency’ but has failed to offer ‘the coherence, innovation, public values and involvement that new challenges require’ (p. 13). New Public Governance has seen greater use of collaboration and horizontal administration but ‘exclusion, limited transparency and high transaction costs’ have been recognised as drawbacks. This volume’s introductory chapter reminds us that complicated issues, however, ‘are never truly solved, and it is always possible to do better’ (p. 12). The success of newer governance arrangements therefore lies in their *hybridity*: ‘they transcend the borders of traditional sectors, policy domains and jurisdictional levels’ by combining ‘different or

contradicting mechanisms' in new and innovative ways 'and foster co-production between different societal actors'. They become *smart* when 'new organisational structures and methods, or costly large-scale reforms, are introduced' (p. 15). This is not a new phenomenon *per se*. However, bringing relevant parties together at an opportune moment to stimulate 'their collective problem-solving capability' while 'finding new governance arrangements in the space that exists between government, market and society' might be 'lofty' in ambition (p. 17). The case study approach in Chapters 2 to 6 in Part 1 of this volume aims to shed light on this: how can the effects of governance create a situation that could be described as *smart hybridity*?

Chapter 2 in Part 1 looks at the role online platforms play in the governance of self-organised citizens' initiatives in response to crises and disasters. Drawing on examples from Nepal and the Netherlands, platform-based initiatives tended to be organised spontaneously and did not require formal rules or clearly delineated responsibilities. Crisis mapping in Nepal and the pool of citizen volunteers, 'Ready2Help', in the Netherlands demonstrated their effectiveness in providing important new mechanisms to organise citizen relief events. Platform management makes use of the strength of citizen initiatives (effectiveness) while retaining the responsiveness of government (legitimacy). Governments should facilitate and align with such initiatives, not seek to regulate or control them.

Chapter 3 explores the challenges in reconciling public-private partnerships, focusing specifically on design, build, finance, maintain and operate contracts (DBFMOs). These complex projects take place in constantly changing surroundings and require flexibility in shifting from contractual to more relational forms of governance. Strongly inspired by the UK's Private Finance Initiative, the Dutch government's new market vision aimed to bundle public and private resources to better tackle the complexity of today's public infrastructure projects. Management should also focus on maintaining good relationships and trust between parties, which would help forge a common identity and ensure continuity. Further research should yield more concrete conclusions.

The role of client networks in the Dutch social care domain and the transformation of its social care system in 2015 are discussed in Chapter 4. Family group conferences and neighbourhood teams illustrate efforts to activate citizens and their social networks by using different mixes of clinical and self-governance. There are difficulties, however, in striking a balance in the low levels of trust between

professional and client networks. The lack of resources and awareness of the clients' rights also presents a challenge, which demonstrates how the combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches again raises questions of effectiveness and legitimacy in hybrid forms of governance in social care in the Netherlands.

Chapter 5 looks at new forms of regional governance in the municipal areas of Berlin, Eindhoven, Copenhagen, Malmö and Zurich. Their aim is to improve their problem-solving capacities and govern smartly in complex and multilevel contexts. These hybrid forms of governance, combining private and public logics, may increase effectiveness but legitimacy remains a key challenge for practitioners. Output legitimacy outweighs input legitimacy in these observed examples. Urban regional authority and achievements are more highly regarded than the involvement or influence of representatives concerning decision-making in the urban region. Alternative sources of representation, as opposed to existing elected representation, would not only contribute local knowledge and insight but also social support.

The final chapter in the first half examines private governance arrangements as a smart way of improving the sustainability of global value chains. Partnerships between business actors and NGOs, for instance, have led to round-table discussions to agree on standards and implementations by means of certification and labelling. Market-driven uptake of certified products has been disappointing, however. Small holders of agricultural resources and products (coffee, wood, cocoa, fruit, palm oil) reap very few benefits. Some solutions for sustainable value chains, such as landscape approaches, certification systems from production countries, along with experiments with blockchain technology, have certainly emerged. Even so, resource investment in current partnerships, labels and traceability systems might lead to more path-dependent but radical changes.

The remaining chapters in Part 2 engage with international scholarly reflections based on the conclusions that emerged in Part 1. They share ideas about theoretical approaches to hybridity and smartness of governance, in addition to their methodological and practical implications. This helps to address the strengths of the concept of smart hybridity while also acknowledging its potential weaknesses and limits in practical settings. Chapter 7 stresses the importance of integrating institutions, cultural organisations, expertise, knowledge and skills, all of which require new governing capacities in the public service. Hybrid arrangements must align with

existing structures, markets, NGOs and citizen advocacy, along with any given policy dilemma. Management skill sets must also be cultivated through training, mentoring and elevating their value and contribution to the new governance arena. Finally, hybrid leadership requires varied and multifaceted leadership – it is essential in collaborative governance regimes though evidence would require further research.

The theorisation of collaborative governance arrangements and the challenges that arise in practice are discussed in Chapter 8. Governments must understand the nature of a problem but also the skills and resources at their disposal to address it. Co-production, certification, contracting and commissioning are suggested as arrangements to implement more hybrid forms of collaborative governance. Policy capacity is integral to the effectiveness of any mode of governance but issues of corruption and clientelism may question legitimacy. Such arrangements require better and stronger empirical analysis, though the informative and critical essays and case studies in this volume prove to be a good point of departure.

Chapter 9 questions the implementation of tools seen in this volume to date in order to explore how the smart and hybrid governance paradigm can add to traditional public administration and NPM. These aspects of public and network governance, along with what is meant by ‘smart’ in this volume, need to be integrated with more value-based public administration, new public services and the ongoing discourses concerning public value.

Chapter 10 presents reflections of smart hybridity in studies of innovative coordinating practices in public management by highlighting the importance of the following: tasks, context, politics and power, mixed public–administrative systems, processes, resources, accountability, impact, time and diversity. Smart practices need to go beyond the macro-level of theories, however, in order to better understand the nuance that emerges from smarter governance arrangements and how the best work in practice.

Chapter 11 evaluates contributions in relation to forms of hybrid governance. Its relative success should be measured against its desired outcomes. This can be considered in terms of mobilising actors, harnessing complexity when it comes to the production of effective and efficient solutions over which there should be broad ownership. Hybrid governance should be treated as a design experiment in which overall goals and expectations are agreed upon while ensuring

innovative governance design is tested, assessed and redesigned through trial and error.

Chapter 12 weighs the benefits of hybrid governance against its potential malevolence: a vehicle that exploits misery and misfortune when the worst features of markets and hierarchies are combined. The challenges that arise from hybrid governance must be accounted for should they help solve some of society's most complex and wicked challenges.

The concluding chapter sums up the editors' observations and findings addressed throughout the volume, leading to suggestions for further research in relation to hybrid governance: various governance combinations and dynamics, moral dilemmas, further models to assess smartness in terms of governance, life-cycle analyses, limitations, resources, capacities and skills of actors, as well as institutional conditions. Both editors and contributors have certainly addressed the shortfalls and limited insight concerning the provisional nature of smart forms of hybrid governance. Despite the narrow scope, being predominantly confined to the Dutch and Rhineland and Scandinavian context, their use of applied case studies to unpack mixed governance arrangements grounds the theoretical framework. This proves to be a valuable reference point to which future research can refer once the effects of hybrid forms of governance are further investigated.

Seán Keane