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Country Analysis of Collaborative Governance

Practices and Power Distance Relations:

United States, Japan, and Israel

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Abstract

Collaborative governance is a process of civic engagement that involves both governmental and non-governmental participants as well as groups of citizens. In the United States, collaborative governance at the local level is celebrated for its grassroots approach to problem solving and policy making. Collaborative governance initiatives, however, are not always successful. There may be confusion in what the desired outcome truly is or how the power is properly distributed among participants. Power plays a key role in how participants approach the collaborative process. This paper seeks to examine the context of collaborative governance and power distance in other geographic locations in comparison to the US. The paper will first examine similar terms often associated with the cooperative process involving the public and state actors. Following the initial analysis, this paper will discuss power in the collaborative governance policy process under the lens of power distance as one of Geert Hofstede (1980) six dimensions of culture. Power distance and collaborative governance relations will be compared in the context of the United States, Israel, and Japan. Information for the context of these specific countries was gathered through remote interviews conducted February-April 2021.

Introduction

The term collaborative governance supports a variety of different meanings and interpretations. Over the past decade, it has become a rather ubiquitous term across different industries. The individual words in the pairing appear contradictory in different places around the world. The word governance indicates a system in which parties are being directed or controlled. In contrast, the word collaboration suggests a decentralization of power in an effort to bring parties to work together to complete a task or goal. Yet, when combined, the two words in the joined term, the definitions of each become melded into a powerful concept that allows for possibilities that neither definition offers on its own. More specifically, collaborative governance is a process that involves both the public and private sector, as well as the community in addressing and solving issues that no one party could solve independently.

From a United States perspective, collaborative governance is defined as engaging groups which may include the general public, different levels of government as well as non-governmental stakeholders in the policy process through various engagement and deliberation processes (Amsler and Foxworthy, 2014). Collaborative governance in the United States is part of a transition from a bureaucratic public policy process to one focused more on participatory government. The government began to face more complex and interdependent issues thus requiring a greater network of collaboration. Goldsmith and Eggers (2004) noted that “the traditional hierarchical model of government simply does not meet the demands of this complex, rapidly changing age.” Collaborative governance does not do away with bureaucracy, but rather it allows for public agencies to involve non-governmental organizations as well as the public in forming and implementing public policy solutions. Too often, collaboration occurs

solely when new decisions or actions are required, rather than in a continual, integrated, and engaged manner (Green & Johnson, 2015). Through engaging people across boundaries, public administrators are able “to carry out a public purpose that could otherwise not be accomplished” (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). Collaborative governance takes place across the different levels of government and relies heavily on public participation. By including the public and various stakeholders, public administrators are able to identify policy solutions that provide the most effective outcomes to complex problems.

The term collaborative governance began to gain traction over the past two decades as governments began to involve the public and private sector stakeholders in the policy making process. There are many different definitions for collaborative governance as well as many other terms and phrases used to describe similar participatory processes. Collaborative governance takes on many different definitions across sectors, therefore it is important to properly define the term in comparison to similar government and non-governmental group interactions. Collaborative governance processes are consensus oriented and extend beyond mere consultation (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Ansell and Gash (2008) further suggest that non-governmental stakeholders “have real responsibility for policy outcomes.” Therefore, the decision-making process is ongoing and deliberative in an overall engaging policy solution process.

Similar Terms

The definitions for collaborative governance may be compared to a variety of other terms to describe similar processes. For example, this paper will examine terms such as coproduction, deliberative democracy, and participatory governance. There are a multitude of other terms and phrases used to describe collaborative and cross-sectoral governance, however, this paper will

focus on the few mentioned above, as well as examples of different countries in which these terms and processes have been implemented. The country examples provide a better understanding of the diverse call for public participation and private sector agents in public policy decision making. The examples also aid in illustrating the similarities and differences between these terms and processes in comparison to collaborative governance.

Coproduction was originally described in the 1970's by Eleanor Ostrom, an economist at Indiana University. She defined coproduction as “the process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not in the same organization” (Ostrom, 1996). Initially, coproduction was explained through the lens of policing. Ostrom provided examples of how communities rely on police, and police rely on relationships with communities. Therefore, coproduction leads to a “synergy between what a government does and what citizens do can occur” (Ostrom, 1996). Coproduction suggests a reciprocal relationship between government and citizens. Citizens may become more competent in what is possible for the success of their communities. Having more competent and involved citizens through coproduction may also allow public agencies to explore more cost effective options. Levine (1984) argues that more public agencies turned towards establishing a strong foundation between government and citizens as a way to deal with declining budgets. Governments therefore began to desire a more cooperative and engaging process involving the public to allow for greater efficiency (Osborne et al., 2013) in the public policy making process.

Coproduction, similar to collaborative governance, may be interpreted under a broad realm of definitions and actions. Public agencies and administrators may refrain from using coproduction due to the lack of a strong definition of the process (Jo and Nabatchi 2016).

However, defining coproduction as an “umbrella concept” allows for less rigidity in its application therefore expanding its usefulness while also providing proper validity to the variety of processes that may be applied (Nabatchi et al, 2017). There are various processes that may take place under the umbrella of collaborative governance, but a key component is ensuring that resources and knowledge are pooled to allow for the public to be involved “in the delivery of their own services” (Boyle & Harris, 2009). Coproduction differs from collaborative governance in that it centers more heavily on the outcome of direct participation from the public rather than on how the different parties participated in the ongoing development and communication involved in the process.

Governments around the world have joined in the pursuit of involving the third sector in the policy decisions and implementation processes. Many countries in Europe have turned towards coproduction as the best way to involve both public agencies and the citizens. A recent study of coproduction in Sweden exemplifies the importance of citizen involvement in the provision of social services (Pestoff, 2009). The author argues that the move towards coproduction in Sweden was necessary because there was “a major legitimacy crisis for the public sector as a provider of welfare services” (Pestoff, 2009). The study focused on parent and teacher involvement in childcare in Sweden and concluded that the government’s openness to coproduction was stifled by a glass ceiling for the participation of citizens involved in the process. The study found that parents and instructors were only able to offer marginal feedback on a consultative rather than collaborative basis (Pestoff, 2000). The research in Sweden calls for a more collaborative or participatory approach to engaging the third sector.

Another important term to examine the public engagement process is deliberative democracy. Joseph M. Bassette originally coined the term in 1980 in his work titled *“Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government”* (Dryzek, 2010). Deliberative democracy focuses heavily on the communicative process and collective power. Deliberative democracy may also be viewed as an expansion of representative democracy given that it calls for stronger citizen participation . In practice, deliberative democracy provides a space for public discussion allowing citizens to engage in politics and become more well informed and involved in the policy decision making process (Sharon, 2018). Cohen (2007) notes,

“Deliberative democracy is about reasoning together among equals, and that means not simply advancing considerations that one judges to be reasons, but finding considerations that others also can reasonably be expected to acknowledge as reasons.”

In terms of public policy decision making, this description notes the importance of including citizens in the formation of policy. The goal of deliberative democracy is inclusive and effective communication to determine the best option for all parties. Another goal of deliberative democracy is what some refer to as “deliberative empowerment” practiced at both the individual and institutional levels (Fischer, 2009). Empowering those beyond public administrators and agencies allows for a more cooperative decision-making process through which solutions are decided upon and supported by a collective voice. Deliberative democracy is another example of how public administrators have sought to bridge the divide between government and the people. The deliberative process focuses on reasoned discussion aimed to form knowledgeable opinions, whereas collaborative governance seeks to incorporate multiple stakeholders in a

consensus-oriented process of policy making. Deliberative democracy centers on a robust communicative aspect, rather than consensus and process implementation.

In 2007, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation implemented a deliberative democracy approach through participatory budgeting (Johnson, 2009). Johnson explores three case studies involving deliberative democracy in Canada involving the Canadian Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NSP), and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). The three organizations all succeeded in institutional deliberative empowerment; however, the author argues that only the TCHC successfully implemented deliberative democracy through full deliberative empowerment of the public as well. The TCHC developed a Tenant Participatory System to provide a network of interactions among stakeholders, tenants and other parties involved in the housing process (Foroughi, 2013). Through this process, tenants are involved in budgetary planning meetings identifying necessary projects, appoint representatives and vote on what they believe is best for the community (Johnson, 2009). The deliberative approach allows for voices to be heard at all levels towards one collective action plan.

The final term to discuss in relation to the cooperative cross-boundary process is participatory governance. Citizens participating in the act of governance is one of the most basic forms of democracy (Osmani, 2007). Participatory governance relies on “the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation (Fung & Wright, 2003). Edwards (2001) defines the process as governments becoming more of a “facilitator than a deliverer of services and more comfortable in steering than in rowing.” Therefore, governments now take on the position as a participant alongside the public and

nongovernmental organizations. However, the government remains at the top of the hierarchy of participation. The goal is to allow citizens to participate, however, often not in full collaboration.

An example of participatory governance may be found in village governance practices in India. Fung and Wright (2003) provide an example of how the government in India has created a system through the democratic process that grants individual decision-making authority to the villages. The democratic processes began to take place in the villages once the power was passed from the states to the local officials or Panchayat systems, particularly in West Bengal (Fung & Wright, 2003). The village council in West Bengal began “Gram Sansad” meetings (Ghatak, 2000), or meetings where the local council engaged the voters. The meetings were described as a participatory governance process because there was an open dialog between citizens and local officials over matters regarding public policy changes in the villages (Ghatak, 1999). The process in West Bengal, however, was not collaborative in the sense that the interactions were purely dialog based. The citizens were there for their voices to be heard, but their formal input was not further requested in the decision making process. Ghatak & Ghatak (1999) conclude that the Panchayat system in West Bengal is one of the first examples of participatory governance in India. The authors note that the process was a good place to begin the process of public engagement, however, there is still room for development in the collaborative process.

The previous terms all function to define integrative processes in which local governments involve citizens and nongovernmental actors in the policy making process. Coproduction, deliberative democracy, and participatory governance all represent grass-roots initiatives for public engagement. The terms are often used interchangeably in various regions around the world. In addition, these terms are used in similar contexts to that of collaborative

governance, yet collaborative governance represents a more integrative process in which power is distributed equitably among government officials, citizens, and non-governmental actors.

Participants are involved in all steps in the decision making process allowing for greater levels of collaboration and efficiency. Collaborative governance, therefore, is a response to the demands of the people to not only be heard, but to actively be a valuable stakeholder in the public policy process.

Demand for Collaborative Governance

There is a growing demand for collaborative efforts in public administration in the United States, as well as in many other countries around the world. Pestoff (2009) notes that countries throughout Europe desire to provide better “governance of social services in order to meet major demographic, political and economic challenges facing the welfare state in the 21st Century.”

The ways in which governments implement these approaches, however, vary according to locations. For example, in the United States, there is a strong demand by the citizens for more involvement in government decisions, leading to a wide grassroots investment. This has led to an increase in various institutional arrangements across sectors to handle interdependent issues and situations. Examples of public agencies working to collaborate with the public may be found at the local level through active citizen commissions and advisory boards (Callahan, 2002). These boards allow citizens to collect information, analyze complex issues, and provide feedback to local government agencies. The local agencies work directly with the members of the advisory boards to create well-informed public policy initiatives. For larger scale collaborative governance initiatives such as federal work, multi-agency management, and collaborative public management (McGuire, 2006) the focus is less on grassroot participation and more on organized

groups to represent certain interests. Collaboration remains at the forefront of both local and large scale governance initiatives throughout these decision making processes.

While the desire for participation is prominent, the needs are not always met. In an interview with an individual conducting research on the Ombudsman Institution in Turkey, it was communicated that there is a new initiative for “good governance” in the country. Institutions in Turkey are trying to introduce principles of collaboration and participatory governance; however, they are not effective at an institutional level. The interviewee stated that high level officials in the country are trying to promote the principles of collaboration, yet the bureaucratic nature of their approach reflects the lack of experience with involvement in the private sector and with the citizens. In 2012, however, the legal frameworks of the municipal governments were rearranged to reflect “people parliaments” (Kartal et al. 2015). The “people parliaments” were established as an alternative dispute resolution in the public sector. It was revealed in the interview that the government has recently adopted an online platform known as CIMER. CIMER is run by the government and functions as an online platform for citizen complaints (The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2019). The CIMER platform is a positive way for the government to listen to the public and build trust. However, the interviewee has discovered in their research that the complaints often remain unheard. They continued by stating that collaborative governance efforts in Turkey are not promoted sincerely. The government's efforts to solve problems through public participation do not actually involve the public. Therefore, there is a desire and a platform for public voices to be heard, however, public officials are reluctant to integrate public opinion into policy decisions.

Politics and Power Conditions

One of the main components to understanding collaborative governance in areas outside the U.S. is the place of power in the collaborative approach. Power conditions are an external context that serve as a determinant to collaborative governance regimes and can be difficult to illustrate (Bryson et al., 2015). Collaboration calls for a particular level of shared power. However, tensions arise when power is not distributed equitably in a collaborative effort (Cheng and Orth 2018). Power in the collaborative approach may be found in how the participants are convened and how power is distributed, as well as available resources to particular stakeholders (Bryson et al 2006). There is a distinct power dynamic between public administrators and the public, even in the most democratic societies (Terzi 2011). Therefore, power may serve as a boundary to full participation by private actors and citizens as well as public officials. The public's view of power distance may greatly impact a government's ability to implement a collaborative governance approach. The following section of research will examine the role of power distance in the effectiveness of collaborative governance regimes in the United States, Japan, and Israel.

Geert Hofstede in the 1980's identified six dimensions of culture to explain how countries organize themselves: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, and long-term vs short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). For the sake of this research, we will be focusing primarily on the power distance dimension, however, it is important to note that all six dimensions of culture may be explored in relation to how different geographic locations view collaborative governance. Power distance specifically refers to how a culture maintains hierarchical structures and how communication is perceived between the levels of the hierarchy (Rudd, 2007). A culture with a low power distance

index maintains more fluidity across the levels of the hierarchical structure. There is communication across these levels and room for mobility between them. In contrast, high power distance cultures maintain rigid lines between levels in the structure. A centralized authority exists that is recognized and understood by all members of the community.

Counter to the idea of power distance is the notion of power sharing. Power sharing requires a breakdown of hierarchical power in which boundaries are blurred and power becomes more fluid (Ran & Qi, 2018). Huxham (2000) argues that in the context of collaborative governance, power is shared, diffused, and opaque rather than having formal power hierarchies. Ran and Qi (2018) provide a contingency framework for power sharing that concludes that power sharing is more beneficial when collaborative governance is more voluntary. In addition, they suggest the following are necessary for effective power sharing and collaboration: strong institutional environments, a wide dispersion of power sources, and a strong acceptance of the cost-benefit analysis. Collaborative governance requires a symmetrical balance of power dynamics in order for all parties to participate in an equitable share of the decision-making process.

Geographic Analysis

To better understand how power distance affects collaborative governance efforts in different geographical locations, we will turn towards Hofstede Insights in evaluating the numerical scores for the individual countries in this section. One hundred and nine countries are evaluated on a scale of 1-100 for each of the six cultural dimensions. To begin, according to the Hofstede Insights, the United States has a power distance score of 40 (Hofstede Insights, 2021). A score of 40 is a relatively low score. This means that hierarchies are established for

convenience and not out of necessity. The convenience aspect allows for more fluidity among levels in terms of mobility and communication. The United States is also an incredibly individualistic society and therefore there is a stronger pursuit of personal power and mobility as well. The low power distance score is reflected in the previous example of the active citizen commissions and advisory boards. Those in public administration positions desire to blur the lines of power to obtain better insight and provide more power to the people (Bromley & Meyer, 2014). This is done primarily to diversify viewpoints while also clarifying the needs and desires of the community.

In contrast to the United States, Japan is considered a more hierarchical society with a power distance score of 54 (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Face is an important aspect of Japanese culture; therefore people respect more rigid boundaries and are aware of the superiority of those in positions above them (Oetzel et al., 2001). Therefore, the decision-making process must take place through more rigid levels. In an interview conducted with Satoshi Ishida, a faculty member in the Department of Public Policy at the University of Nagasaki, Dr. Ishida shared that citizens in Japan have a strong image of the government leadership “and many communities believe that all public issues must be resolved by the government.” Public-private collaboration in this context is facilitated by the government, therefore power dynamics remain rigid lacking any true power sharing initiatives. Dr. Ishida did mention, however, that there is a phrase in Japanese for cross-sectoral collaboration known as “kyoudo 協働.” He noted that the phrase became popular in the 1990’s “when people recognized the importance of nonprofit organizations to complement the role of government” especially in the cases of natural disasters. Collaboration through participation is a newer concept in Japan, therefore Dr. Ishida concluded that “the perspective of

process design and coordination may still be in the developing stage when discussing collaborative governance.” The strong power distance among public administrators and the private sector and individuals in Japan serves as a boundary for effective collaborative governance in the country. However, events, such as the Hanshin Awaji Great Earthquake, have pushed the government more towards collaborative efforts in the governing process.

The final country in this study on power distance and collaborative governance is Israel. Israel is a fairly individualistic culture and reflects the lowest power distance score of the three countries at 13 (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Israelis generally believe in a decentralization of power, therefore there is more room for collaboration. For more context, an interview was conducted for this study with Anat Cabili¹, a specialist in Alternative Dispute Resolution in Israel. Cabili also serves as a facilitator of collaborative processes for the Israeli government. In the interview process, Cabili elaborated on her work with the Israeli Prime Minister’s Cross-sector Round Table. The Prime Minister’s Cross-sector Round Table initiatives began in 2008 to enhance the relationships between the public and private sectors. The purpose of the round table discussions is to promote collective action in Israel and satisfy a high demand for participation among the public. She offered that “public participation is a means to reach better, more up to date, implementable, relevant, and practical decisions. The public in Israel at large is involved in the decision-making process. Cabili was rather optimistic about the collaborative efforts of the Israeli government and private sector agencies as well as public individuals. The low level of power distance in Israel allows for a marketplace of ideas and a stronger desire for participation from the citizens and non-governmental organizations

¹ Anat Cabili is a previous member of the University Network for Collaborative Governance in affiliation with Creighton University.

Greater Call for Collaboration

In the past two decades there has been a strong call for collaborative governance beyond the needs of individual countries and local governments. Global organizations such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations have called upon individual states to adopt collaborative governance responses, especially in regard to global health concerns. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization called on “national governments everywhere to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic” (World Health Organization). The inclusion of all government agencies and all members of society emphasizes the immediate need for collaborative governance in individual countries. Similarly, the United Nations released a statement saying:

“To address the COVID-19 crisis effectively, the state needs to be a collaborator, creating partnerships with civil society and the private sector in a ‘whole-of-society’ approach so as to inclusively engage all communities and stakeholders in efforts to find solutions to the various challenges posed by the pandemic” (United Nations).

Both international organizations are calling for systematic collaboration between government and civil society. Many countries have learned valuable lessons throughout the global pandemic on the necessity of collaboration across the public and private sectors in the face of crisis.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is not the first time collaborative governance efforts have been called upon in the implementation of public health emergency response systems. For example, similar calls for collaboration were warranted during the 2003 SARS outbreak and the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. Similar to the COVID-19 outbreak, countries around the world responded with different measures to control the spread of the diseases. In the case of Taiwan, government officials have adapted an emergency response program in response to failures in previous deadly outbreaks. The Taiwanese government has evolved a system that focuses heavily on

collaborative governance in implementing a more holistic response system (Schwartz & Yen, 2016). Taiwan has worked to engage and mobilize both state and non-state actors in an effort to improve pandemic response. The whole-of-society approach developed by Taiwan includes the central government collaborating with lower levels of government, state hospitals, city hotels, and neighborhood wardens, or the “Li Zhang” (Schwartz & Yen, 2016). The diverse network allows for collaboration across lines to help slow the spread of infectious diseases and better distribute supplies.

South Korea developed a similar emergency response approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Government officials in South Korea were quick to partner with local government officials, private organizations, and citizens in stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The central government partnered with private companies to create innovative solutions such as an app to show where available masks were in supply (Ahn, 2020). In addition, local governments worked in collaboration to reorganize the hospital systems to better aid patients (Choi, 2020). For example, in the city of Daegu, specific hospitals were designated solely for COVID patients and patients were evaluated and placed into four tiers in terms of severity of their symptoms (Kim et al., 2020). Choi (2020) notes that government officials were able to successfully use the collaborative governance process because they gave the various actors at different levels autonomy and flexibility in the implementation of their own policies. The country did not implement a strict lockdown, however, their collaborative efforts allowed for innovative solutions to be formed in a short period of time.

The greater call for collaboration during a global pandemic requires collaboration both across and within borders. The central governments in Taiwan and South Korea provide key

examples of how a collaborative governance approach has the power to save lives with an organized and effective public health response system. Autonomy and flexibility were key in the successes of these countries' responses. Collaboration took place between government sectors, public and private sectors, as well as between the government and the people to exemplify a whole-of-society approach.

Conclusion

Collaborative governance in the United States has become a vital part of the public policy decision-making process. The low power distance dimension and high levels of individualism have allowed for a platform of diverse collaborative governance projects. The lack of strong hierarchical influences in the United States has led to the institutionalization of collaborative government approaches. The United States is unique in its scholarship and implementation practices surrounding collaborative governance. In the research conducted for this paper, no other country had a robust connection of university networks that focus specifically on collaborative governance.

Power distance dimensions play a key role in how governments and citizens view collaborative governance. Countries with relatively high dimensions of power distance experience less acceptance of collaborative processes. The power relations prevent true collaboration processes from occurring. Collaboration efforts are more successful in countries with low power distance scores such as the United States and Israel. Some governments in other countries, such as Turkey, have attempted to implement more collaborative public engagement

practices, however, the attempts reflect more of a participatory approach. The approach in Turkey is more consultative and less consensus driven.

Many local governments in the United States desire to implement a consensus based approach to public engagement. The collaborative process differs across cultures and country lines. Upon examining how different cultures in other countries implement collaborative processes, this paper recommends that local governments in the United States place a larger emphasis on cultural dimensions in the collaborative governance process. There is a strong demand for grass-roots involvement and movements from the public, however, the ways in which local governments implement the collaborative process will differ across communities. Local governments should focus on the different cultures represented in their communities and understand how these cultures perceive power distance. The levels of power distance may differ in a community, especially across ethnic groups. Therefore, it is important for local government officials to understand that groups in the community may perceive power differently and may be more hesitant to participate in collaborative processes.

This study may be expanded to understand how collaborative governance is perceived and implemented in other countries and regions. More specific country examples may provide a better understanding of the diverse use of collaborative governance practices. In addition, this study may be expanded to include the other five dimensions of culture identified in Hofstede's research (1980). Cultural dimensions play a large role in how communities and individuals perceive public participation. Therefore, it is imperative that local government officials understand all facets of the cultural landscape they serve in order to ensure the highest levels of collaboration in the policy making process.

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