

Collaborative Governance, Participation, and Leadership in National Innovation Systems

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Although it was not planned as a thematic or symposium issue, this issue of the journal in fact does have common themes running through its peer-reviewed papers and case studies. These lend unusual coherence to this issue of the journal; they may attest to a developing consensus in innovation scholarship and practice.

In “Negotiating collaborative governance designs,” Plotnikof uses discursive and communicative analysis to examine the power relations shaping collaborative governance in the Danish public sector. The author does so, moreover, in a way that avoids analytical discontinuities across sectors, by stressing the emergence rather than creation of innovation-governance regimes.

In another Danish study, “Public Private Innovation in Healthcare,” Aarøe Nissen considers public-private partnerships in the creation and commercialization of healthcare innovations. Here the stress is on the way that cross-sector innovation practices are defined, in moving from a ‘not invented here’ mindset to commercialization practice premised on the export of welfare innovations. This *interpretive* shift has loosened constraints on the diffusion of welfare innovations among Danish hospitals. The author suggests that the formation of innovation *consortia* would maximize participation along with knowledge generation and spillover. Such concertation would also allow smaller firms to gain from larger firms’ access to knowledge network endowments, while larger firms would benefit from the innovativeness of small firms.

A third paper, “Implementing strategic communications planning,” coauthored by Weber, Backer, Orton, Barnes, Jenkins, and Crecy, is a study of the largest domestic agency in the Federal Government of the United States, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—which historically has accounted for nearly a third of the annual federal budget. Specifically the authors—all DHHS practitioners in various capacities—consider the work of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA) in planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving innovation in print and digital communication products. ASPA relies on Strategic Communication Planning to this end, making use of evidence-based principles of change management and communications, guided by Everett Rogers’ *diffusion of innovations theory*. The process turns on online technologies, outcomes-based accountability, and a cross-functional, cross-divisional, consultative approach. In an analog of the other papers’ emphases on *cross-sector networks*, this study describes the role of *cross-unit partnerships* in strategic communications. The entirety of the effort is a radical departure from extant practices at DHHS, marked as it is by sustained participation, consultation, and collaboration.

The case study in the issue is concerned with complementary questions. In the study titled “Toward a national innovation strategy,” author Smith Oduro-Marfo examines Ghana’s narrow, government-centric, science and technology focused innovation policy and recommends its expansion to a national, cross-sector strategy that also encompasses ‘non-science’ innovation (for instance in education). The proposed national innovation strategy is intended to ‘mainstream’ public sector innovation while linking it to kindred initiatives in every sphere of civic life.

Professor Hikel’s review in this issue of Jingjing Huo, *How Nations Innovate*, frames the limitations and possibilities of these national innovation initiatives. Inertial forces—what institutional economists call *hysteresis*—in the form of prevailing power configurations and customary attitudes toward change stifle innovation. Following the book’s arguments, Hikel notes the relative absence in Anglo-Saxon countries (“Liberal Market Economies”) and the presence in Nordic Europe and Japan (“Strategically Co-ordinated Capitalisms”) of “powerful institutions, including the state, able to create inter-firm coordination [of innovation].” The book’s author finds that the former economies tend to concentrate on finding new ways to fashion established products, i.e., product innovation. In contrast, the latter economies concentrate relatively more on outright invention, and on process innovation: education, innovation, and social equity are vital coordinates in this regard.

In all of these studies, emergent systems of innovation are marked by wide participation, collaboration in networks, the progressive incorporation of innovation, and a balancing of essential influences—especially those of privatization versus governmentalization. What seems to drive innovation is distributed innovation leadership, widely shared along organizations and sectors. Key prescriptions include the following. It is important to

- engage others across all sorts of boundaries (summoning communicative skills, testing assumptions, and finding complementarities and areas of agreement)
- understand innovative leadership as *shared* leadership in complex, interdependent, emergent innovation systems
- leverage diverse knowledge networks in private firms and public agencies of all kinds
- foster democratic forms of shared governance—a democratic ethic
- encourage risk taking and experimentation while relying on the value-multiplication and risk-reduction potential of networks
- build collaboration on affinities in goals, missions, and values
- promote omnidirectional communication
- support goal alignment, mutuality, and accountability among parties to collaborative innovation; and
- allow for the self-organization of innovation leadership across divisions, bureaus, organizational boundaries, sectors, and national borders.

About the Author:

Dr. Mario Antonio Rivera is Regents' Professor in the School of Public Administration, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the United States. A comparativist and policy analyst, he is widely published in the areas of public sector innovation, public ethics, social equity, and diversity.

Dr. Rivera has served since 2008 as Senior Associate Editor of *The Innovation Journal/La Revue de l'innovation (TIJ)* and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* (and its Editors' Council, as former Editor-in-Chief), *Policy and Management Review*, *Problems and Perspectives in Management* (Ukraine), *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* (United Kingdom), *Policy and Management Review*, *Journal of Business and Public Affairs*, *The Journal of Information and Operations Management*, *Revista de Gestión Pública* (Chile), and *TIJ*. He recently completed a four-year appointment to the Public Administration Peer Review Committee of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars Fulbright Specialist Program, with the Institute of International Education, the advisory agency to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, U.S. Department of State (2011-15).