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# Enhancing Public Innovation through Collaboration, Leadership and New Public Governance

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## Introduction

Innovation aiming to develop and implement new public policies, services and organisational designs is frequently praised as an intelligent alternative to across-the-board cuts in times of shrinking budgets. It is also seen as a promising tool for breaking policy deadlocks and adjusting welfare services and delivery systems to new and changing demands (Bason, 2010). At the same time, there is growing evidence that multi-actor collaboration in networks, partnerships and inter-organisational teams can spur public innovation (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011; Ansell and Torfing, 2014). The involvement of different public and private actors in public innovation processes may improve the understanding of the problem or challenge at hand, bring forth new ideas and proposals, and build joint ownership of new and bold solutions (Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). It may also ensure that the needs of users, citizens and civil society organisations are fully taken into account (Bason, 2010).

Public innovation continues to be driven largely by the managers and employees of particular public agencies (FTE, 2013). The 'silo trap' often prevents collaboration across public agencies, and professionally trained public employees' reliance on their own expertise tends to prevent them from tapping into the knowledge and ideas of lay actors (Eggers and O'Leary, 2009). Nevertheless, there seems to be significant growth in collaborative forms of innovation that cut across the institutional and organisational boundaries within the public sector and that also, frequently, involve a host of private actors equipped with relevant innovation 'assets'. A recent study from North America compared the semi-finalists in the competition for the Innovations in American

Government Awards from 1990 to 1994 with all the 2010 applications and found that the proportion of innovation projects based on external, inter-organisational collaboration had increased from 28% to 65%, and the proportion of innovation projects based on intra-organisational collaboration within the US government had increased from 21% to 58% (Borins, 2014). Indeed, the enhancement of collaborative innovation has become a key aspiration of public organisations in many Western countries (HM Government, 2010; Sunstein, 2012). National campaign organisations such as MindLab, Nesta and the Government Innovators Network tend to recommend collaboration as a strategy for enhancing public innovation.

Despite the inherent risks and frequent failures of public innovation projects, the innovation agenda is rapidly gaining momentum in the public sector. Such efforts to develop and implement new and bold ideas in government often bring together a plethora of public and private actors. However, the recent attempt to turn collaborative innovation into a permanent, systematic and pervasive focus of public agencies remains poorly institutionalised. Hence, unless a more precise and sophisticated understanding of the concepts of ‘innovation’ and ‘collaboration’ is developed, there is a risk that both terms are reduced to buzzwords and gain little traction with key stakeholders. Moreover, in reality, collaborative and innovative processes are difficult to trigger and sustain in the public sector without proper innovation management and a supportive cultural and institutional environment. So, in order to realise fully the opportunities offered by collaborative innovation, there is a need for further reflection on the role of public sector leaders and managers and for a transformation of the entire system of public governance.

This chapter aims to spur collaborative innovation in the public sector by clarifying the basic terms of debate and by exploring how new forms of innovation management and new forms of public governance can enhance collaborative innovation. To this end, it defines the basic notions of innovation and public innovation and discusses the relationship between public innovation and social innovation in order to understand better the purposes of different forms of innovation. The chapter then seeks to clarify the notion of collaboration and pinpoint why, how and under which conditions collaboration enhances public innovation. Next, it offers some theoretical and practical reflections about how public sector leaders and managers can advance collaborative innovation. Finally, the chapter argues that the enhancement of collaborative forms of social innovation calls for a transformation of the entire system of

public governance that shifts the balance from New Public Management towards New Public Governance (Osborne, 2006, 2010; Ansell and Torfing, 2014).

## **Innovation, public innovation and social innovation**

Developing a new and promising idea through a heuristic process based on intuition, brainstorming and a pragmatic recombination of old and new elements is a manifestation of creativity, but creativity only becomes innovation when a new idea is implemented and makes a difference (Mulgan and Albury, 2003). As such, innovation is defined here as the development and practical realisation of new and creative ideas in order to produce some added value (Hartley, 2005). Innovation may or may not be successful in terms of added value. Nevertheless, it tends to be driven by the ambition to outperform existing products or practices and generate solutions that are better than the status quo.

Innovation involves change, but not all forms of change qualify as innovation. Only step-changes that disrupt existing practices and common wisdom in a particular area are innovations (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). The disruptive character of innovation means that it is very different from continuous improvement that aims to enhance the quality of public services through marginal adjustments (Hartley, 2011; Osborne and Brown, 2005). Step-changes can be small and incremental and merely change the form and content of particular products and practices, or they can be large and radical and transform both the goals and operational logic of an entire system of commodity or service production or a whole regulatory regime. However, step-changes always involve some degree of discontinuous change and that is precisely the essence of innovation: to develop and implement new and creative solutions that somehow break with the past.

Innovative solutions can be either the result of the invention of something entirely new or the result of the imitation of innovative solutions from elsewhere through a process of adoption and adaptation. Hence, it is not the source of innovation but the local context that determines whether something is an innovation or not (Roberts and King, 1996).

Since Marx and Schumpeter, innovation has been regarded as a key driver of economic growth and a necessary condition for ensuring the competitiveness and profitability of private firms (Hagedoorn, 1996). Market competition forces private enterprises to develop and successfully adopt innovative products, production methods and marketing strategies in order to stay in business. The role of individual entrepreneurs – or, in

larger firms, well-organised research and development departments – is to produce a sufficient amount of innovation to build sustainable competitive advantage and to beat rivals in the market place.

For a long time innovation was perceived as driven by the intense competition found in private markets. As a result, innovation was not considered relevant and necessary in the public sector, in which competition is replaced by hierarchical command and control (Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). Public innovation was considered an oxymoron as innovation was assumed to be incompatible with institutional inertia and the bureaucratic ‘red tape’ of the public sector. Hence, despite the fact that policy problems seem to drive ongoing policy reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) and that small teams of professionally trained public employees tend to respond to emerging problems by creating innovative solutions (Swan, Scarbrough and Robertson, 2002), it has been a persistent myth that the public sector – due to the lack of competition and the absence of a profit motive – is much less innovative than the market-based private sector (Borins, 2001; Moore and Hartley, 2008; Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). As such, the interest in public innovation as a tool for improvement in the public sector is a recent one, dating back to the ‘Reinventing Government’ movement in the early 1990s (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

The idea that innovation is more relevant to the private than the public sector is inherently problematic because it underestimates the ability of the public sector to innovate and exaggerates the innovative capacity of the private sector. First, it fails to recognise that political and professional ambitions, policy problems and changing demands often replace competition as a trigger of innovation in the public sector (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Polsby, 1984; Koch and Hauknes, 2005). Second, it forgets that, although competition incentivises private firms to innovate, it does not provide a method for innovation in and of itself (Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). Hence, when private firms of a certain size seek to respond to competitive pressures by innovating their products and production systems, they tend to face many of the same barriers as public organisations because they are also organised as bureaucracies with hierarchical command structures, an internal division of labour, cultural boundaries between different professions, rule-governed behaviour and a tendency towards institutional isolation that means that innovation is often produced in-house by research and development departments or through separate ‘skunk works’ outside of the main firm (Halvorsen *et al.*, 2005).

The public sector also has some sector-specific barriers due to the fact that it is politically governed, lacks economic incentives and produces

regulations and services that are extremely complex and often based on legal rights and entitlements. However, these specific barriers are partly offset by sector-specific drivers in terms of the large public budgets that make it possible to absorb the costs of failures; well-educated and professionally trained staff who possess relevant competencies; relatively easy access to scientific knowledge from public universities and research institutions; favourable conditions for getting inputs from citizens and users who are often directly involved in the production of public services; and the absence of competition between public agencies, giving the possibility of interagency learning, policy transfer and innovation diffusion (Rashman and Hartley, 2002; Halvorsen *et al.*, 2005).

With these drivers in mind, it comes as no surprise that the public sector is far more dynamic and innovative than its reputation suggests. Contrary to classical public administration theory – from Max Weber, to Anthony Downs and Charles Lindblom – the public sector seems to create a lot of innovation (Borins, 2001; Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). This becomes clear when we compare the public sector in today's advanced industrial economies with that of thirty years ago. Within that short time span, new policy areas such as preventative care, active employment policy and climate change mitigation have emerged. A whole range of innovative services have been developed, such as online education, neighbourhood renewal programmes based on the empowerment of local citizens, training of chronically ill patients to master the management of their own illness and the possibility of serving prison sentences at home with an electronic tag. Public organisations have been transformed by the introduction of systems of strategic management, performance-related wage systems and quasi-markets. Innovations in service delivery processes have seen the creation of one-stop service agencies, public-private partnerships and digital services. Finally, the role and position of the public sector has been subject to innovation due to the recent emphasis on active citizenship, co-production and volunteering that shifts the balance from state to society by giving citizens and civil society organisations a much more active role in relation to the public sector and the provision of welfare services (Bovaird and Löffler, 2012).

Historical studies of the development of social policies (Ehrenreich, 1985; Dean, 1991) confirm that the public sector has always produced a considerable amount of policy and service innovation. However, it is only recently that researchers and policy makers have begun to talk about public innovation and discuss how it can be stimulated in response to globalisation, fiscal and demographic pressures and the rising service

expectations of citizens and private companies. In the last decade, public innovation has moved up the public sector agenda in many countries in Europe, America and the Asia-Pacific region, but it seems that the action still falls short of broader aims and aspirations. The rhetoric about how public innovation can help to get 'more with less' has become stronger, but public innovation as a tool for changing policies and services remains underexplored and underexploited and is far from constituting a permanent, systematic or pervasive endeavour in the public sector.

The notion of social innovation has played an important role in the recent expansion of the public innovation agenda. When, in the 1980s, innovation was first discussed in relation to the public sector, the focus was primarily on how the public sector could contribute to innovation and growth in the private sector through scientific research, knowledge transfer, technology policy and participation in national innovation systems that brought together relevant public and private actors to stimulate the growth of clusters and networks (Porter, 1985; Lundvall, 1992). The public sector was merely seen as a 'midwife' for innovation and growth in the private sector.

The Reinventing Government movement (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) – that emerged in the United States at the beginning of the 1990s and later came to be associated with the advancement of New Public Management in Europe (see Hood, 1991) – changed the focus. This was based on the premise that a combination of public entrepreneurship, strategic leadership, performance management, contracting out and increased user orientation would help the public sector to become more dynamic and innovative in order to increase its efficiency and enhance user satisfaction. Although the attempt to make the public sector more efficient would eventually make it possible to reduce public expenditure, cut taxes and stimulate private sector growth, the purpose of the innovative public sector reforms proposed by the Reinventing Government movement and the supporters of New Public Management was, primarily, to improve the public sector rather than the private sector.

The attempt to improve the public sector and make it more efficient could be supported by new technologies. Hence, whereas the public sector was initially seen as a driver of competitiveness in the private sector, private sector innovation – in terms of new computer technologies – was increasingly seen as a driver of public sector improvement. As such, an expanding stream of research from the 1980s onwards focussed on the conditions for introducing and exploiting new technologies into the public sector (Perry and Danzinger, 1980; Perry and Kraemer, 1980; Kraemer and Perry, 1989; Perry *et al.*, 1993).

Whereas both the Reinventing Government movement and the attempt to spur technological innovation in the public sector focussed on a combination of organisational and process innovation, the recent emphasis on social innovation has shifted the innovation agenda in the direction of service and policy innovation. Social innovation emerged as a concept in British and French debates in the 1960s and 1970s but was only recently embraced by the European Commission, which described it as ‘innovations that are both social in their ends and in their means’ (European Commission, 2010). The scholarly definition of social innovation varies, but one of the authoritative sources defined it as ‘innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organisations whose primary purpose are social’ (Mulgan *et al.*, 2007, p. 8). There are two important novelties in this definition of social innovation. First, the purpose of innovating is not merely to make the public sector more efficient but rather to develop new programmes and services that aim to meet unmet social needs. Second, innovation is not created merely by actors and processes internal to the public sector but involves deliberative attempts to tap into the creativity of charities, associations and social entrepreneurs in order to find new ways of meeting pressing social needs.

The notion of ‘social innovation’ has not caught on to the same extent in all Western countries, and the discourse on social innovation appears to be stronger in the Anglo-Saxon countries than in continental Europe, despite the attempts of the European Commission to promote social innovation as an important response to the economic and social crisis in Europe (European Commission, 2010; 2013a; 2013b; BEPA, 2010). However, the underlying idea that public innovation should both seek to make the public sector more efficient by reforming administrative processes and organisational designs and serve a social purpose by fostering new and better policies and services is shared by policy makers, public managers and public employees in many European countries (European Commission, 2013b). As such, the key question is no longer whether the public sector should aim to spur innovation in policy, services and organisational designs in order to enhance the production of social and public value but, rather, how this can be done.

### **The case for collaborative innovation**

It is often assumed that innovation in the private sector is generated by forward-looking business leaders, risk-taking entrepreneurs and

creative inventors (Schumpeter, 1976; Drucker, 1985; Knight, 2005). However, the truth is that most innovations in private enterprises are created either by large R&D departments or by strategic alliances with other firms (Teece, 1992; Nambisan, 2008). Nevertheless, the myth about the individual innovation 'heroes' that allegedly drive innovation in the private sector has inspired the public sector to look for its own innovators (Doig and Hargrove, 1987). Some highlighted the role of elected politicians in bringing new ideas to the table in order to gain support from the voters (Polsby, 1984). The Reinventing Government movement celebrated the entrepreneurial spirit of public managers engaged in strategic management as well as private contractors who were competing for tenders in newly created quasi-markets (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). More recently, there has been a growing interest in employee-driven and user-driven innovation in the public sector (LO, 2008; Bogers, Afuah and Bastian, 2010).

This search for public innovation heroes fails to recognise that innovation is seldom the result of the efforts of a single actor (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In fact, it is often in the meeting between different public and/or private actors that new ideas are developed, processes of mutual learning are accelerated, and joint ownership of new and bold solutions is built.

Research suggests that multi-actor collaboration strengthens and improves all phases in the innovation process (Roberts and Bradley, 1991; Roberts and King, 1996; Hartley, 2005; Nambisan, 2008; Eggers and Singh, 2009; Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). The first phase – *generating understanding of problems and challenges* – is improved when the experiences and knowledge of different public and private actors are taken into account. Hence, the experiences of particular user groups can fundamentally change the way that problems in public service delivery systems are perceived and can prevent public actors from wasting money, time and energy on solving the 'wrong' problem.

Meanwhile, *the development of new ideas* (the next stage in the process) is strengthened when actors with different perspectives and opinions are brought together. Inter-organisational exchange and the involvement of lay actors may bring forth new ideas that the lead agency would never have thought about. For example, collaboration between the chief of the fire and rescue department and the leader of municipal eldercare services in Greve Municipality in Denmark fostered an innovative solution to the deaths by fires caused by elderly people falling asleep while smoking in bed: when elderly people applied for municipal care, the social worker who visited the elderly person to assess their



needs would from now on be accompanied by a fire and rescue worker who would give advice about fire safety. This innovative solution led to a drastic decline in the number of elderly deaths by fire.

*The selection and testing of the most promising solutions* is enriched if actors with different backgrounds and concerns participate in the negotiation of gains and risks as well as in the real-life testing of new solutions. As such, patients participating in trials and experiments provide invaluable insights that help to adapt innovative solutions before they are rolled out in the entire public sector.

Meanwhile, *implementation of innovative solutions* is promoted when the relevant actors coordinate their actions and have joint ownership of the new solution. Exchange and pooling resources in the implementation phase helps to avoid overlaps and create synergies, and broad participation by different actors, including employees and user groups, fosters a common understanding of the motives for adopting an innovative solution, which in turn will often help to reduce implementation resistance.

Last but not least, *the diffusion of successful innovations* is enhanced by collaboration because the participants will act as ambassadors and disseminate information concerning both the content and the advantages of the innovative practices. As such, it is well established that innovation diffusion is propelled by collaboration in inter-organisational networks (Rogers, 1995).

Bommert (2010) captured the core of the argument for collaborative innovation when he claimed that collaborative innovation is the only innovation method that ensures that the possession of relevant innovation assets such as creative ideas, courage, venture capital and implementation capacity – rather than organisational and institutional boundaries – determine who contributes to the production of public innovation. Both competitive markets and hierarchical forms of government tend to create innovation processes that are trapped within the narrow confines of a single organisation. As a consequence, they fail to reap the fruits of collaboration with relevant actors who can provide important inputs to the innovation process.

The literature on social innovation also tends to emphasise the collaborative aspect of innovation processes. It is frequently asserted that end users, vulnerable groups and community organisations in particular should participate in initiating, designing and implementing innovative policies and services, because their input to the innovation process is critical to its success (Von Hippel, 2005; 2007; European Commission, 2013a). However, this chapter argues that collaborative innovation

should not privilege a specific group of actors but aim to include all the relevant actors who can somehow contribute to the different phases of public innovation processes. End users, disadvantaged citizens and civil society organisations may prove to be important for creating innovative solutions that enhance social justice, but experts, private firms, consultancy houses, interest groups, politicians, and so on may also provide insights, ideas and resources that spur the creation of innovative solutions in the public sector.

The notion of collaborative innovation resonates well with the growing interest in 'collaborative governance' through networks, partnerships and inter-organisational communities of practice (Agranoff, 2007; Ansell and Gash, 2008; O'Leary and Bingham, 2009). 'Governance' is defined as the formal and informal processes through which society and the economy are steered and problems are solved in accordance with common objectives (Torfing *et al.*, 2012). However, it is not always clear how 'collaboration' is conceptualised.

One approach is to distinguish between cooperation, coordination and collaboration (Keast, Brown and Mandell, 2007). Cooperation involves the exchange of relevant information and knowledge across organisational and sectoral boundaries, while coordination involves conscious efforts to create synergies and prevent overlaps in public regulation and service delivery. Collaboration, meanwhile, is based on a sustained interaction through which a plethora of actors aim to find common solutions to shared problems. Nevertheless, collaboration involves more than sustained interagency communication and more than pragmatic attempts to escape the silo trap by pooling resources and facilitating joint action. Collaboration is based on a mutual commitment of two or more actors to work together towards a common end that can only be reached through the transformation of materials, ideas and/or social relations (Roberts and Bradley, 1991). In collaborative processes social and political actors work on a shared problem in order to find mutually acceptable ways to conceptualise and solve them. In the course of interaction the actors may not only transform their shared objective in terms of a particular policy, service, process or organisational design. They may also change their roles and identities and the logic of appropriate action that guides their actions (March and Olsen, 1995; Engeström, 2008).

Collaboration is sometimes associated with deliberation that fosters 'unanimous consent' (Straus, 2002). However, reaching a total consensus can be extremely demanding in terms of time and resources. It is also detrimental to innovation because problematising conventional wisdom

is an important driver of innovation and because total consensus is often achieved by getting everybody to agree on the lowest common denominator. As a method, this favours incremental adjustments rather than more discontinuous change and disruptive innovation (Gorman, 2013). In contrast to the predominant view that consensus is obtained through deliberation in a power-free space of communicative reason governed by the force of the better argument that leaves no space for dissent (Habermas, 1987), this chapter follows Gray (1989) in defining collaboration as involving the constructive management of differences in order to find joint solutions to shared problems. People collaborate because they are different and expect that their different experiences and perspectives will provide a more complex and nuanced understanding of the world, challenge and disturb tacit knowledge, and produce new and creative ideas through passionate debates based on joint aspirations, constructive contestation and mutual respect.

Collaboration breaks down if the participants develop antagonistic relationships with each other, but if the differences between the actors are managed in a constructive way, they will be able to reach agreement about the content and character of the innovative solution that they aim to realise (Gray, 1989; Mouffe, 2005). The agreement will be provisional, contested and involve compromise, but a majority of the actors will rally behind it, despite their potential reservations and concerns (Norval, 2007). The advantage of this way of conceptualising collaboration – as a conflict-ridden attempt to find joint solutions to shared problems through provisional and disputed agreements – is that it makes room for the differences and passions that fuel the processes of creativity and innovation.

### **Rethinking public leadership in the face of collaborative innovation**

The attempt to enhance collaborative innovation in the public sector requires the development of a new kind of public leadership and management. In the last few decades public leaders and managers have been trained and encouraged to focus on inputs – in terms of the use of different public resources – and outputs – in terms of the performance of their staff and department (Osborne, 2006). However, this limited focus on resource consumption and performance can neither help drive innovation nor initiate and orchestrate collaborative processes.

Leading and managing innovation requires the ability to manage ‘emergence’ in the sense of the future development and realisation of

new and creative solutions that break with and, perhaps, outperform existing practices. To manage emergence, it is not enough to recruit, instruct and correct public employees through what is commonly referred to as 'transactional leadership', nor is it sufficient to inspire, motivate and incentivise staff through what has been referred to as 'transformational leadership' (Parry and Bryman, 2006). Transactional and transformational leadership continue to be important to ensure an efficient implementation of predefined goals through well-described bureaucratic practices, but they have limited value when it comes to rethinking goals and practices and changing the way that problems and challenges are reframed and new practices are designed, tested and adjusted. Rather, the promotion of public innovation requires a combination of 'adaptive' and 'pragmatic' leadership.

*Adaptive leadership* aims to determine which public activities to maintain and which to adapt and transform. It then seeks to develop new practices by crafting and testing prototypes and by aligning people across an organisation in order to ensure effective execution and to facilitate the integration of new activities with old ones (Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow, 2009). *Pragmatic leadership* aims to transform the culture of public organisations in ways that enhance double loop learning and use existing tools to solve problems by changing established practices – including transformative learning that develops new metaphors and narratives that help frame what is difficult to comprehend, expand knowledge and toolboxes and change identities and roles (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Mezirow *et al.*, 2000).

Leading and managing collaboration, meanwhile, also poses a huge challenge to public leaders and managers who in the last decades have been told to focus on the performance of the staff, agency or department that they are in charge of (Christensen and Lægread, 2006). In the 1980s many people thought that the public sector was in need of more charismatic and visionary leadership that was capable of redefining public sector objectives, inspiring the workforce and turning around ossified and run-down public organisations. In hindsight it can be seen that this kind of 'change leadership' was only relevant for executive managers, who often failed to connect to the rest of their organisation and its external stakeholders and failed to generate sustainable and long-lasting transformation of public organisations (Parry and Bryman, 2006). The efforts of public leaders and managers to enhance public innovation through multi-actor collaboration call for a new type of leadership and management that is more 'distributive', 'horizontal', 'collaborative' and 'integrative'.

*Distributive leadership* encourages public leaders and managers to lead others in ways that enable them to lead themselves (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Parry and Bryman, 2006). In order to spur collaboration, leaders and managers at different levels of an organisation must distribute and disperse leadership functions within their organisation by facilitating the empowerment of their employees and the creation of self-managing projects, teams and networks (Wart, 2013). People who possess the competences and knowledge to develop and implement new and bold solutions need support from sponsors and champions at the executive level, but most of all, they need decentralised day-to-day leadership within their organisation. For example, they need project and team leaders and network managers who can help them to focus their attention, search for new ideas and test the most promising ones in the course of daily operations. Middle managers must find ways of recruiting, training and empowering employees who can exercise innovation leadership, even though they do not have a formal leadership role. In addition, they must support and coach those employees who take on dispersed leadership functions and act as innovation managers in concrete innovation projects. The ultimate goal of distributive leadership is to facilitate self-regulation.

*Horizontal leadership* aims to support and enhance interactive and collaborative processes among peers. Horizontal leadership of projects, teams and networks enables different professions to engage in creative problem solving, based on dialogue and collaboration (Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012). However, horizontal leadership can also help to facilitate collaboration with, and between, private actors such as service users, citizens, NGOs and private firms that can bring new ideas to the innovation process. To illustrate, some Danish municipalities have begun to recruit and train local 'playmakers' – public employees who are given the task of initiating and supporting cooperation between public and private actors – in order to spur the development of new and better public solutions. Public facilitators dedicated to stimulating horizontal interaction between public and private actors are likely to play an important role in opening up the public sector to new ideas. Unfortunately, public authorities are not always committed to collaboration with private actors because they think that it is too complicated and time-consuming and because they do not think that collaboration will generate inputs that match the ideas of the trained professionals in the public sector. This is confirmed in a Danish survey that showed that, although a majority of the public managers who responded claimed that they made efforts to involve users and citizens in collaborative innovation, they also stated that they seldom used the inputs

and ideas from users and citizens when designing new and innovative solutions (FTF, 2013).

Horizontal leadership is sometimes referred to as *collaborative leadership*. The task of collaborative leadership is to design appropriate institutional arenas for collaborative governance and facilitate collaborative processes by emphasising the mutual interdependence of public and private actors, building trust, developing a shared understanding of the overall mission and encouraging the production of intermediate outcomes (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Archer and Cameron, 2008). A crucial challenge for collaborative leadership is to drive the process onwards from problem definition, direction setting and policy development to decision-making and implementation. Making bold decisions and implementing them in practice is the *sine qua non* for innovation but often presents a challenge to leaders of collaboration since the choice of one solution over another may give rise to conflicts and antagonism. This makes conflict mediation a key part of collaborative leadership (Gray, 1989; Ansell and Gash, 2008).

*Integrative leadership* also focuses on collaboration in horizontal arenas. As such, the key ambition of integrative public leadership is to bring diverse groups and organisations together in semi-permanent ways, and typically across sector boundaries, to solve complex problems by developing a new set of solutions that help to achieve common goals (Crosby and Bryson, 2010). According to Crosby and Bryson (2010), the research on integrative public leadership has shown that leaders are most likely to have success with creating cross-sector collaboration in turbulent environments and when separate efforts by several actors from different sectors have failed. Their research indicated that successful leaders aimed to form an initial agreement about a problem and sought to design the collaborative process in ways that involved the creation of boundary objects, experiences and groups. They drew on the competences of the collaborators, were responsive to key stakeholders and made a point of avoiding imposed solutions. Integrative leaders ensured that trust-building activities were continuous and that the structure of collaboration was flexible and open to new actors, as well as for leader succession. Integrative leaders were prepared to commit time and energy to mitigate power imbalances and deal with shocks, and they managed to reframe conflicts and disputes in ways that had appeal across sectors. Finally, such leaders focused on building accountability systems that track inputs, processes and outcomes and on developing methods for gathering, interpreting and using data in processes of creative problem solving. Nevertheless, Crosby and Bryson cautioned not

to exaggerate the impact of integrative leadership by insisting that ‘the normal expectation ought to be that success will be very difficult to achieve in cross-sector collaborations, regardless of leadership effectiveness’ (Crosby and Bryson, 2010, p. 227).

The challenge of integrative leadership is to design and govern institutional arenas for collaborative governance while mobilising the knowledge, resources and energies of relevant actors and to facilitate self-regulated processes of collaboration based on the recognition of a mutual interdependency among public and private actors. According to recent theories of ‘governance networks’ (Jessop, 2002; Kooiman, 2003; Meuleman, 2008), this challenge can be met by the exercise of ‘*meta-governance*’. Meta-governance is defined as the ‘governance of governance’ and can be seen as an attempt to influence collaborative governance processes without reverting to traditional forms of command and control – it is exercised by means of creating and framing interactive arenas and facilitating and managing processes of multi-actor collaboration (Sørensen and Torfing, 2009). The tools of meta-governance are network design, goal and framework steering, process management and direct participation in interactive arenas.

In order to enhance collaborative innovation, these abstract ideas about leadership and management need to be translated into more concrete recommendations. In order to do so, this chapter proposes that the barriers to collaborative innovation in the public sector can be mitigated or overcome by public leaders and managers who assume the role of ‘conveners’, ‘facilitators’ and ‘catalysts’ (Straus, 2002; Crosby and Bryson, 2010; Morse, 2010; Page, 2010; Ansell and Gash, 2012).

The role of the *convener* is to bring together relevant actors and spur interaction and the exchange of information, views and ideas. Tasks for conveners include:

- Selecting teams of innovators by identifying people with relevant innovation assets in terms of knowledge, practical experience, creative ideas, resources, formal power and so on, and motivating them to participate in the innovation process;
- Clarifying the roles of different actors and drawing up a process map that delineates who participates, when and how in the different phases of the innovation process;
- Encouraging interaction and exchange between participating actors by stimulating the recognition of their mutual dependence on each other’s resources;

- Securing political support for the search for innovative solutions and protecting the integrity of the collaborative arena; and
- Giving direction to the joint search for innovative solutions and aligning the goals and expectations of the actors.

The role of the *facilitator* is to get the actors to collaborate by constructively managing their differences and engaging in processes of mutual learning that bring them beyond the common denominator. Facilitators can:

- Lower the transaction costs of collaborating by arranging good and effective meetings, ensuring smooth communication and activating those actors who are not contributing as much as they could by motivating and empowering them;
- Enhance and sustain trust between actors by creating opportunities for informal social interaction, encouraging the development of common rules and procedures for interaction and triggering a virtuous cycle of trust-creation through a unilateral display of trust in the other actors;
- Develop a common frame of understanding by creating a common knowledge base through knowledge exchange and joint fact finding missions and developing a common language based on jointly accepted definitions of key terms and ideas;
- Resolve or mediate conflicts so that they become constructive rather than destructive and ensure that irresolvable conflicts are de-personalised and conceived as joint puzzles rather than road blocks; and
- Remove obstacles to collaboration by securing support from the executive leaders in the participating organisations and negotiating how the costs and gains of innovative solutions are distributed among the actors.

The role of the *catalyst* is to create appropriate disturbances that bring the actors out of their comfort zone and force them to think creatively and develop and implement new and bold solutions. As such, the catalyst can:

- Construct a sense of urgency either by referring to the presence of a 'burning platform' in the sense of a situation that demands immediate and radical change due to dire circumstances or by demonstrating the presence of a 'window of opportunity' that creates a unique chance to change established practices;
- Prevent tunnel vision by encouraging actors to change their perspectives where necessary, including new and different actors in the team, or bringing new and inspiring knowledge into play;



- Create open and creative search processes by changing the venue for meetings and the way that actors interact and collaborate when they are together;
- Facilitate the management and negotiation of the risks associated with innovative solutions and coordinate implementation processes to enhance synergy and avoid overlap; and
- Ensure that participating actors assume the role of ‘ambassadors’ and use their strong and weak ties to diffuse explicit and tacit knowledge about the innovative solution.

The deliberate attempt of public leaders and managers to convene the relevant actors, facilitate collaboration and co-creation and catalyse the development and realisation of innovative ideas needs to be supplemented with persistent attempts to build a strong ‘innovation culture’ in public organisations (Dobni, 2008). Creating an innovation culture involves recruiting and nurturing creative talent, enhancing diversity and mobility, and encouraging staff members to use their professional knowledge to generate and test new ideas. It also involves challenging a zero-error culture, the detailed rules and regulations and demotivating performance measurement systems that prevent innovation (Ansell and Torfing, 2014). Finally, it involves attempts to create flatter and more flexible organisations with clear mission objectives and strong leadership to breach administrative silos and create more borderless organisations with flexible and permeable boundaries. What is called for is a cultural revolution in the public sector that requires a complete rethinking of the way that the public sector is organised, governed and led in terms of its relation to society. In short, there is a need to transform governance in order to enhance innovation.

### **Transforming governance**

The public sector has traditionally been organised as a Weberian bureaucracy, but the mounting critique of public bureaucracies for being too ineffective and inefficient (Downs, 1967) stimulated the adoption of governance reforms inspired by the concept of New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). According to this school of thought, the performance of the public sector could be enhanced if some public services were privatised or contracted out and the remaining public service organisations were subjected to competitive pressures from private contractors who were operating in new quasi-markets, or from the creation of internal markets in the public sector. In the market-driven

public sector, service users were re-cast as 'customers' and given the right to choose freely between competing public and private service providers. In order to be able to deal with these competitive pressures, New Public Management thinking asserted that the public sector should import a number of strategic management tools from the private sector, such as contract steering of private providers and special purpose agencies, fixed budget frames with internal flexibility and management by objectives, performance measurement and performance-based pay systems.

New Public Management has not been systematically implemented in all countries, but most Western democracies have been influenced by at least some of its core ideas (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). The total effects of New Public Management are difficult, if not impossible, to assess. However, while the public sector in some countries has benefitted from a stronger emphasis on policy goals, evaluation and public leadership, there are also critical reports about increasing fragmentation, growing distrust and the excessive costs and distorting effects of performance measurement (Dent, Chandler and Barry, 2004; Christensen and Lægreid, 2007).

Most importantly, however, New Public Management does not seem to have fulfilled its promise of enhancing public innovation (Ansell and Torfing, 2014). Contrary to expectations, performance management has tended to create a zero-error culture that prevents innovation; competition has tended to prevent the exchange of new ideas that are treated as business secrets; and free consumer choice has turned citizens into demanding and complaining users who do not feel part of the solution (Hartley, Sørensen and Torfing, 2013). New Public Management may have succeeded in spurring public innovation through a combination of an increased focus on results, competitive tendering and procurement and an emphasis on public entrepreneurship, but it has failed to stimulate collaboration across organisational and sectoral boundaries.

Consequently, the enhancement of collaborative innovation in the public sector requires a shift from New Public Management to what is increasingly referred to as New Public Governance (Osborne, 2006; 2010; Torfing and Triantafillou, 2013; Morgan and Cook, 2014). The contrast between the two paradigmatic ways of governing the public sector and their relation to the external environment is shown in Table 7.1.

The comparison of these two conceptual paradigms brings out the defining features of New Public Governance. These features tend to enhance and sustain collaborative innovation. Trust-based management resting on co-leadership, mutual feedback and empowerment tends to enhance the motivation of public employees to help solve

Table 7.1 Comparison of New Public Management and New Public Governance

New Public Management	New Public Governance
Self-interested public employees must be subjected to tight monitoring and control	Self-interest is combined with a strong public service motivation that calls for trust-based management
The problem is the public monopoly over service production that makes services too poor and too expensive	The problem is the growing complexity and wickedness of the problems and challenges that are facing public service production
The solution is to enhance competition through privatisation and contracting out	The solution is public–private collaboration through networks and partnerships
Intra-organisational management should focus on resources and performance	Inter-organisational leadership should focus on processes and results
Citizens are customers with free service choice	Citizens are co-producers and co-creators of welfare services
The goal is the enhancement of efficiency through rationalisation based on LEAN technologies that aim to cut slack	The goal is the enhancement of efficiency, effectiveness and quality through resource mobilisation and innovation

Source: Authors' compilation.

social problems, and creates a space for collaboration that can produce innovative solutions (Nyhan, 2006). Focusing on complex problems and challenges can stimulate a cross-disciplinary and inter-organisational search for new and bold solutions, and the turn from product- to service-orientation may open the eyes of public administrators to the active and creative role of citizens in co-production (Osborne, Radnor and Nasi, 2013). The emphasis on collaboration rather than competition is bound to enhance the exchange of knowledge, ideas and resources, and to stimulate mutual learning processes and generate support for new and innovative strategies (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). Collaborative leadership aiming to create effective and constructive processes may help to overcome organisational and professional boundaries and stimulate mutual and transformative learning processes (Wart, 2013). Turning citizens from passive consumers to active citizens enhances co-production and co-creation that can harness the experiences, competencies and energies of end users to renew public services (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2012). Lastly, the transgression of the narrow confines of 'lean-based' rationalisation technologies, that merely aim to cut slack within a given process of service production, opens up

opportunities for creative processes that aim to re-cast the systems of public service production – as well as the underlying perception of the problems, goals and causalities – in the search for disruptive innovations that can provide more and better services for less (Radnor and Osborne, 2013).

New Public Governance is likely to stimulate collaborative innovation and, for those seeking to reap the fruits of this potent innovation method, it is encouraging to see that the ideas and practices associated with New Public Governance are gaining momentum in public sectors throughout Europe (Torfing and Triantafyllou, 2013) and in North America (Morgan and Cook, 2014). However, just as New Public Management did not replace bureaucratic forms of government, it seems likely that New Public Governance will co-exist with remnants of former public administration paradigms, thus adding a new layer of institutional practice to existing systems. The co-existence of different governing paradigms will no doubt give rise to the formation of hybrid forms of governance with unforeseen and ambiguous effects on the innovative capacity of the public sector (Christensen and Lægheid, 2011). Nevertheless, the more hegemonic the New Public Governance paradigm becomes, the greater the chances that public innovation will flourish and help improve public policies and services in the face of present and future challenges.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained how the notion of social innovation has helped to create a new focus on service and policy innovation in the public sector and has shown how collaboration – defined as the constructive management of difference – can drive public innovation. It has also explored the challenges that collaborative innovation poses to public leadership and management and delineated three important roles for public leaders and managers aiming to enhance collaborative innovation. Finally, it has shown that the further advancement of collaborative innovation is predicated on a shift from New Public Management to New Public Governance.

Despite its importance and promise, the research on collaborative innovation is only in its infancy and further research is needed. Five top priorities for this future research agenda are clear. First, a combination of qualitative case studies and quantitative research is needed in order further to document the causal relationships between multi-actor collaboration and public innovation. Second, research should seek to explain why

the involvement of private stakeholders in the implementation phase tends to be stronger and more frequent than participation in the initiation and design phases, and also aim to explore how this imbalance can be corrected. Third, a detailed mapping of the political and institutional barriers and drivers of collaborative innovation is needed, so that the barriers can be removed and the drivers can be further sustained. Fourth, the dilemmas associated with the exercise of innovation management need to be identified. Finally, the political conditions for a transition to New Public Governance must be assessed.

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