

Citizen Engagement and Democracy in America

Araral Eduardo

Associate Professor

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

National University of Singapore

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Abstract

We introduce three innovations to the literature on collaborative governance and public sector motivation. First, we empirically test Ansell and Gash's contingency theory of collaborative governance using data from 168 US cities. Second, we differentiate 13 modes of collaboration into procedural and meaningful modes and explain variations in their use. Third, we employ a robust Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) step-wise regression model to test how collaboration is contingent with political institutions such as the form of government, how politicians are elected, term limits and term of office, veto powers and mechanisms of accountability, among others. Our findings suggest that public managers have varied, contingent and strategic motivations when they engage with the public. We also find and explain why a mayor council form of government is less likely to be engaged in meaningful modes of collaboration while the degree of public accountability has no statistical effect on propensity to collaborate. Our findings challenge the conventional wisdom from public choice and public sector motivation literatures which suggest that public managers are intrinsically motivated, respectively, by private and public interests. We conclude with implications for practice and future research.

All are welcome!

Enquiries: Ms. Kanas Lau

Tel.: 3442-7533 Email: sakanas@cityu.edu.hk