SARA SVENSSON

The connotations of collaboration: European linguistic and scholarly perspectives on collaborative governance

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This study grew out research within the larger framework of the project **Transforming into Open, Innovative and Collaborative Governments (TROPICO)** (http://tropico-project.eu), conducted at CEU by Agnes Batory and Sara Svensson. TROPICO is a research project funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme (Grant Agreement nº 726840), running June 2017 through May 2021. The project investigates how public administrations are transformed to enhance collaboration in policy design and service delivery, advancing the participation of public, private and societal actors. This paper draws on conceptual research carried out in 2017 and 2018, to which all partners in the Consortium contributed. Some parts of the text in this working paper are reproduced from three reports written in this period and available on the project website.

ABOUT THE PAPER SERIES

Working Papers reflect the on-going work of academic staff members and researchers associated with the CEU Center for Policy Studies. They are intended to facilitate communication between CPS and other researchers on timely issues. They are disseminated to stimulate commentary and policy discussion among an international community of scholars.

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THE CONNOTATIONS OF COLLABORATION: EUROPEAN LINGUISTIC AND SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Sara Svensson

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INTRODUCTION

When the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, introduced his selected team of new commissioners on September 10, 2014 he said that "I want to overcome silo-mentalities and introduce a new collaborative way of working in areas where Europe can really make a difference."[1] With this emphasis on collaboration at the introduction of his selected team of new commissioners, the President-elect Juncker joined a long line of European politicians who have stated the need for government units to bridge organizational cleavages to address difficult policy problems and deliver public services more efficiently, in this case through more cooperation between commissioners and across DGs in Brussels. At the European level, there is an interest to promote collaboration for the sake of reaching various policy goals where the Union has policy competences, but also to promote such practices by national and local governments to for instance ease citizens' interactions with government for licenses and benefits through improved information flows through systems and to improve the success rate of interventions in the social area through cooperation between health, employment and social units.

At the European level, statements also abound about the importance of collaboration with the non-governmental sector and with citizens and their representatives. An example of an area in which this is emphasized is international development, which according to the European Commission requires "spaces for private-public interaction and collaboration" (European Commission 2014: 14) because of the need to handle multiple and cross-sectoral policy problems in parallel to achieve results. Another example is the development of tools for reaching out to citizens. In a 2017 advisory report to President Juncker, 'collaboration' is emphasized as one of four main areas next to transparency, integrity and participation where the 'European Union needs to develop strategies'. Strategies are perceived necessary to increase scope and usage, but also to prevent current misuse of various participatory tools such as online consultations (Van den Branden 2017: 17) which often fail to yield input and are easily captured by special interests. Moreover, collaboration in the context of digitalisation is currently high on the agenda for most European governments (Hammerschmid et al. 2016) since there are high hopes that innovative information and communication technology tools have the potential to make government both cheaper and more inclusive. Collaboration and digitalisation are therefore presented as key to European Commission activities with respect to the transformation of public administration at multiple levels (European Commission, 2016), expected to result in increased efficiency, efficacy and legitimacy.

This need for more collaboration has also driven a need for more knowledge on *how* to achieve collaboration. Due to the close alignments between policy needs and knowledge production supported by the European Union, five large research projects are currently being supported that are expected to find "new institutional strategies and mechanisms to enhance collaboration among government

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1   European Commission. 2014. Press release: The Juncker Commission: A strong and experienced team standing for change. Available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-984_en.htm?locale=en (accessed February 1, 2019)

departments and with other actors to collaboratively design, produce and deliver public services and policies" (EC CORDIS 2016a). The projects look at issues such as co-production, co-government (COGOV, see EC CORDIS 2016b), co-creation (CO-VAL, see EC CORDIS 2016c), and empowerment of citizens for better service creation (CITADEL, see EC CORDIS 2016d). These are terms that denote various practices where citizens and organizations are not only objects or recipients of government interventions, care or benefits, but are in some way involved in the services they receive, or private firms are involved in the financing and/or provision of public goods, such as in public-private partnerships. Other projects investigate the application on several labels of the above to the specific field of energy (ENLARGE, see EC CORDIS 2016e) and the use of Information and Communication Technology (TROPICO, see EC CORDIS 2016f). The latter project. TROPICO, provided support for the research leading up to this working paper.[2]

Even though EU member states are heavily impacted by community decisions, in practice the vast majority of collaborative governance arrangements are carried out at national and sub-national levels. European policy rhetoric seems to take for granted that there is a common understanding of collaboration. This paper aims to question this assumption of shared understanding. To what extent are policy-makers, academics, private sector representatives and citizens in different countries likely to have different understandings of collaborative governance? What do different actors associate with the concept? In other words, what are the national connotations of collaboration? This is important since government choice of words always matter, as numerous critical policy studies have shown (e.g. Bacchi 1999; Schmidt 2011; Clarke et al 2015). 'Mobility' differs from 'migration' in how it resonates and impacts various audiences, 'childcare' from 'early education', 'female circumcision' from 'female genital mutilation', to take just a few well-known examples. In these choices, governments are frequently not autonomous, but also relates to policy actors or governments at other levels, in order to influence the way the government unit is perceived or even funded.[3]

In line with Christensen and Lægreid's definitions of coordination (2008b:102), this paper sees collaboration as a concept that covers a specific type of interactive behaviour taking place with other governmental actors (internal collaboration), and with actors outside the governmental sector, be they citizens, organised groups or private sector actors (external collaboration). Internal and external collaboration in turn can be horizontal (e.g. internal collaboration across ministries or agencies on the same level of governance) or vertical (e.g. external collaboration with international organizations).[4] This interactive behaviour can take place throughout the policy cycle, including at the stage of problem definition (what's needed in a specific area or sector), policy design (what can and should be done), implementation (be part of delivering decisions) and evaluation (seeing what went wrong) (for more conceptual discussions, see Batory and Svensson 2017). Thus, the references to collaboration cited in the introductory paragraph are examples of calls for more internal collaboration and improved external collaboration. However, while this inclusive conceptualization of collaboration as reasonable, the paper expects that the emphasis is placed differently on one form or the other in different country

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2   See imprint page for details. I am much indebted Agnes Batory for her leadership of our part of this research project and for much of the intellectual content of this paper (see references to our joint work).

3   I thank Andrew Cartwright and Diane Stone for insightful comments on a previous version of the paper. This aspect is one that has for instance been more emphasized as a consequence of their thoughts.

4   Note that unlike Christensen and Lægreid (2008b:102), collaboration with sub-national (regional and local) actors is classified as vertical internal collaboration, though, since it takes place within the realms of the state.

contexts, and that the term collaborative governance will have different meanings. Furthermore, the well-known linguistic diversity of the European Union's member states is expected to cause difficulties in translation.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide conclusive answers to the questions raised. Rather, the objective is to provide some preliminary answers that can open up avenues for further research. The main finding of this exploratory paper is that there is a need for caution in both assessments of, and advocacy for, collaboration due to the divergence of national interpretations of the term.

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

This working paper grew out of research within the larger framework of one of the EU-funded projects mentioned in the introduction. The project 'Transforming into Open, Innovative and Collaborative Governments' (TROPICO) investigates how public administrations are transformed to enhance collaboration in policy design and service delivery, advancing the participation of public, private and societal actors, with a focus on the role of information communication and technology. To establish the extent to which connotations of collaboration differ across the EU, the paper relies primarily on a structured input request from academics with country expertise on ten member states: Belgium Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The country sample displays geographical diversity as well as differences with respect to public administrative traditions (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014; Meyer-Sahling and Yesilkagit 2011).

National connotations of collaborative governance involve linguistic, agency-oriented and structural aspects. Thus, the academic experts[5] were asked to submit their own assessment of the following dimensions and aspects of 'connotations':

- A translation of the term 'collaborative governance';

- Explanation on whether the translation is literal or not;

- Provision of related terms;

- How the term is used by academics, policy makers and the broader public;

- Any association of the term with domestic traditions versus it being embedded in an imported/foreign policy discourse;

- The broader time frame of the term being in use (if it is);

- General negative and/or positive associations.

The answers were analysed comparatively, and the conclusions cross-checked with two sets of documents provided by the country experts. In a first round the experts provided reports and documents produced by both governments and think tanks, and in the second round government-issued laws, regulations and guidelines that the experts deemed were of importance to collaborative governance

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5   Peter Triantafillou, Sonia Royo, Koen Verhoest, Joachim Vandergraesen, Erik Hans Klijn, Tiina Randma-Liiv, Cerlin Pesti, Lise H. Rykkja, James Downe, Gerhard Hammerschmid, Kai Wegrich and Claire Dupuy provided their expertise in the context of Deliverable 2.2 of the Tropico Project (Batory and Svensson 2017: 14).

in the given country. The first set consists of 154 reports from the 10 participating countries, and the second set consists of 119 documents. While neither set of documents is complete or representative, they nonetheless give a good indication of variety and general trends. The analysis was also conducted in two steps. First, a conventional qualitative analysis (based on close reading) was conducted on the answers and selected documents, in which the themes of these texts were validated against the experts' assessments on how collaborative governance is perceived in the respective country. Secondly, documents were manually coded according to sender and audience. Thirdly, a systematic and computer-assisted text-analysis was conducted of translations of summaries of the legal-administrative documents, using the online-based *Voyant Tools*.

THE UNDERSTANDING AND CONNOTATIONS OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IN EU COUNTRIES

There are many reasons for trying to make government units overcome organizational cleavages, utilize private sector capacities and include citizens in the planning, execution and evaluation of activities, but *legitimacy* of the democratic and administrative system, the *efficiency* in the delivery of public services, and the need to address *increasingly difficult policy problems* feature high among them. Difficult policy problems are sometimes referred to as 'wicked problems' (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Head, 2008), and usual examples are issues related to climate change or social issues that span several professions. Research has shown that, at least in Europe, and with regards to internal government coordination practices, new collaborative schemes indeed often deals with such problems (Lægreid et al. 2013). A typical example that scholars have looked at was a Belgian policy, that according to a case study "breaths wickedness", namely a scheme seeking to deal with multiple problems faced by some group youngsters such as school drop-out, mental issues, health issues, family" and that conventional sector-approaches had not managed well (Verhoest, Voets and Molenveld 2014: 129-130). A corresponding example at the national level is the German inter-ministerial working group on Climate Change Adaptation that was established in 2008 (Hustedt 2014: 153). However, common definitions of collaboration, policy rhetoric, and general statements about public administration reform in Europe[6] may mask divergence in meaning people attribute to the term - not the least because there are many analogous terms in use in English, such as coordination, cooperation, joined-up governance, network governance and meta-governance, all of which partly capture the same phenomena.

   In what follows usage and connotations are reviewed based on the answers received from country experts and the analysis of the two sets of documents described in the section above. The analytical framework is straightforward and based on the questions '*how*?', '*who*?', '*when*?' and '*why*'. First, what terms are used to denote or translate 'collaborative governance' in the European languages used in the countries of our sample? Are there differences in what terms are used to refer to internal and external collaborative governance, respectively? Is 'collaborative governance' or a direct translation thereof in use, or rather any other term/s? Second, who, if anybody, uses the term 'collaborative governance'? Is it widespread in the public sphere or confined to academic circles? Is it something that the broader

6   See also Lægreid, Randma-Liiv, Rykkja and Sarapuu, 2014; Lægreid, Sarapuu, Rykkja and Randma-Liiv, 2015.

public and private actors would recognize and understand? Third, when and in what types of context is the term and related terms typically used? And, finally, why would certain actors use (or not use) the term? While this would need more empirical research to fully capture, contextual information on how and when the term is used by whom can hint at whether it would be because of any specific historical or socially based connotation? Furthermore, to what extent is it explicitly linked to the processes of legitimacy, efficiency and efforts to address complexity that is supposed to drive it?

The exercise is explorative in that it was conducted without any specific expectations for individual countries, or expectations for particular connotations to be associated with any specific factor, such as type of government or public administration characteristics (e.g. Painters and Peters 2010). However, the expectation is that a richer understanding of variations will be useful for theory-building on collaborative governance mechanisms in different country contexts down the line, and for policymakers to develop an awareness about the importance of policy discourses. Within the area of public policy studies, scholars have paid increasing attention to how policies are never just transferred, but translated in this process to become something partially different (Stone 2012; Clarke et al 2015). The linguistic aspects of this process, though, have been insufficiently studied (but see Lendvai 2015), maybe due to the dominance of the English language in international scholarly debates and the overrepresentation of Anglo-Saxon scholars and Anglo-Saxon themes in these fora. This paper makes a contribution in this respect.

THE TERMS DENOTING COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

This section deals with how collaborative governance is expressed and translated. It relies primarily on input from the country experts, supported by the two sets of reviewed documents.

Few languages have a direct and close (literal) translation, or partial translation, of collaborative governance, but the Spanish *gobernanza colaborativa* is an example of a direct translation (relying on the common Latin origins of the world) and the German *kollaborative Governance* an example of a 'semi-translation' where part of the original expression is kept. Phrasing based on derivations of 'cooperation' are also fairly close, such as the Danish *samarbejdende styring* or Norwegian *samstyring* even though it should be noted that governance is notoriously difficult to translate since idiomatic terms based on verbs for 'rule', 'steer' or 'govern' are difficult to turn into versions that distinguish between government and governance.

In addition to, or instead of, literal translations, a range of other terms are in use to denote the behaviour of interest here (i.e. interactive behaviour taking place with other governmental actors, and with actors outside the governmental sector, be they citizens, organised groups or private sector actors). Starting with Germany, a cohesive approach to collaborative governance, encompassing both its external and internal dimension, can be discussed as *Governance, Kooperation*, *Kooperative Verwaltung* or *Zusammenarbeit (in Netzwerken)*. Collaboration with external actors is discussed mainly as *öffentlich-private Partnerschaften* when private actors are concerned and *partizipative Governance* or *Beteiligung* if democratic participation of civil society representatives and citizens are in focus. Collaborative governance is a well-researched topic in the Netherlands, but documents often discuss collaborative governance under different terms and without using the (academically) 'correct' definitions, which

would be *collaboratieve governance* for collaborative governance, *netwerk governance* for network governance, *netwerk* for network and *samenwerking* for collaboration. In the Dutch-speaking parts of Belgium *netwerk management* and *managen van samenwerking* are the most frequently employed terms, but *horizontale samenwerking*, *samenwerking*, *netwerk governance* and *netwerken* constitute common alternatives. Another term is *transversale samenwerking* (transversal governance).

With the exception of transversal governance, similar variations of terms dominate in Scandinavia, with an emphasis on derivations from 'cooperation' and 'networks'. For instance, the Danish *samarbejdende styring* mentioned above is very rarely if ever used to describe the phenomenon. Instead there are Danish terms that are fairly close (but not identical) with the term collaborative governance such as *netværksstyring* (network governance), *samskabelse* (co-production) and *samarbejdsdrevet innovation* (collaborative innovation). In policy writing, Sammenhængsreform (cohesive government reform) have been in vogue, indicating how:

> "*the government will create better coherence for citizens and employees through smarter, more coherent management and better cross-sectoral transition. <...> We must reconsider the governance based on what gives value to the citizen. This means, among other things, that tasks must be solved based on how the citizen experiences the greater context rather than how we usually solve them.*" (Danish Ministry of Finance 2017, our translation).

Similar Norwegian terms are *samstyring, nettverksstyring, samordning, samvirke, samhandling* and *samarbeid* – with perhaps the difference of Danish having another term for co-production (*samskabelse*) whereas Norwegian has *samordning* as a word close to 'coordination'. Arguably the Danish term *tillidsbaseret ledelse* (trust-based management) can also be said to denote analogous behaviour. The Spanish literal translation of collaborative governance, *gobernanza colaborativa,* was mentioned above, but perhaps more common are *gobernanza multinivel* (multilevel governance) or *gobierno abierto* (open government).

In the countries above, the use of terms partly overlaps with similar terms in English (in the UK), where 'partnership' and 'network governance' also capture cooperative behaviour in and by government. On the other hand, some languages seem to contain fewer terms. Although a literal translation would be fully possible to construct in French (gouvernance collaborative), this is not in use, and the closest equivalent may be *gouvernement ouvert* (open government) or *transversalisation*, which may explain that this term is used also in Belgium. In Estonia, *ühtne valitsemine* (united or 'whole-of' governance) is the preferred term, whereas the Hungarian term *együttműködő kormányzás* (cooperative governing) can mostly be found in documents originating with European institutions that have been directly translated. Other terms that would be part of 'collaborative governance' are applied frequently, such as *társadalmi egyeztetés*, which is mostly translated as 'public consultation', but could more literally be translated as 'societal agreement [procedure]'. The term *részvételi democrácia* (participatory democracy) is also in use by academics and policymakers, although a tendency can be detected to employ it to indicate both 'direct democracy' and the more recent forms of deliberative democracy experiences.

It is too early to say whether the European funding of the large-scale research projects on collaboration that were mentioned in the beginning will have an effect on what terms are used. It is conceivable that that the societal and policy interaction that is required and built into these type of projects will make direct translations of the term more common, with possible changes in connotations down the line.

VARIATION IN WHO USES THE TERM COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

While there is growing English-language scholarship around collaborative governance (Batory and Svensson 2017), the term does not appear to be popular with either academics or policy-makers in non-English speaking European countries.[7] On the direct question if the literal term is used by academic authors in their own context, a clear 'yes' was provided only by the UK and Spanish partners, and even in the latter country other terms are more common. Perhaps surprisingly, among policymakers it is not commonly applied even in the UK. The exception seems to be Spain, where *gobernanza colaborativa* is not only used by academics and policy makers, but can also be understood by a broader informed public. However, its usage is still limited when compared to related terms, such as *gobierno abierto* (open government) or *gobernanza multinivel* (multilevel governance).

When it comes to academic debates, there may be differences between national scholarly debates and those that connect or refer to international literature. This is the case in German, where academics who use *kollaborative Governance* tend to do so when putting it into an international context or joining international scholarly debates. There is no mention of the term 'collaborative government' in the main French speaking public administration journals (e.g. *revue française d'administration publique*, *revue internationale des sciences administratives*) and very few reference to the term *open government*. In practice, this means that European-level policymakers seeing to initiate debates on 'collaborative governance' in these two large and important European countries need to apply vocabulary for respective context, i.e. use words that politicians and public administrators are already encountering through regular or reforming practices, or risk missing out significant target audiences.

A second important finding is that with respect to the terminology that does exist – the long list of terms conveyed in the previous section for collaborative governance – there seems to be little difference between policy-makers and academia. As mentioned above, there is some discrepancy in the case of the UK, and in France the term 'open government' is more used by policy-makers than by academics, even if marginally.

Indeed, in this area, the policy debate seems to follow the terminology used in the scholarship of the given country. On the other hand, it seems that in the countries with longer histories of collaborative government and governance processes, the diversity (or confusion) of vocabulary is present in both academic and policy discourses. For instance, as noted by the Norwegian expert: "Different Norwegian terms are used in different documents, sometimes meaning the same thing and sometimes not. There is sometimes a distinction between vertical and horizontal relations, and sometimes not. It varies whether collaborative governance refers to internal relations within a single organization, or external relations between different organizations. Collaborative governance is sometimes seen as a process and sometimes as an end result. Often, these distinctions are not spelled out clearly, hence the term is often

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7   While our survey does not cover all 28 member states of the European Union, it includes sufficient geographic and political diversity to allow this to be a general statement.

vague and ambiguous." (Communication by TROPICO country expert - Norway, 2017-09-04). In countries where the concept is newer, such as '*ühtne valitsemine* whole-of-government' in Estonia, there may be less confusion, although this may also depend on the phenomenon being less politically salient, such as in Hungary (*együttműködő kormányzás* / cooperating governing/government).

THE CONTEXT IN WHICH COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IS DISCUSSED

The review of grey literature and the data provided by country experts (Batory and Svensson 2017) and the legal codes of collaboration (legal or administrative documents setting out rules for when and how public administration should and may collaborate, see Batory and Svensson 2018a, Batory and Svensson 2018b) revealed significant differences in terms of when and how collaborative governance, and its associated terms, are discussed. In several countries, it is relatively recent to refer to internal and external collaborative behaviour in and by governments, regardless of the term. However, the term collaborative governance is especially new, and may become more common. In general, discussion around some topics described by the terms seems to be intensifying which can often be linked to specific events, policy areas or reforms. The analysis of the trajectories of legal and administrative documents included as a third data source for this working paper, demonstrated that there is significant current codification activity across the sample with relation to core areas of collaboration, but it is driven by different concerns across countries.

An extreme example of an event leading to a new discourse is the 2011 terrorist attack in Norway, which killed 77 persons, most of them children or adolescents on the island Utoya. Given that a key reason for the slow response to the attack was identified as poor coordination, not surprisingly the need for *samvirke* (collaborative behaviour) featured commonly in the discussion on how a similar incident could be prevented (for an analysis conducted of how the events exposed weaknesses in crisis management coordination that have only partly and incrementally been addressed in terms of organizational changes, see Christensen, Lægreid, and Rykkja, 2015). A less dramatic example is the Estonian policy debate around the need to strengthen 'whole-of-government', which refers to coordination and collaboration mostly within the central government (but with an element of outreach), which was clearly sparked by an influential 2011 OECD report, which defined it as an approach "*associated with a desire to ensure the horizontal and vertical co-ordination of government activity [requiring] government bodies, regardless of type or level, to work across portfolio boundaries [enabling the] public administration to be more responsive to the needs of government and citizens.*" (OECD 2011).

Different words are associated with different policy sectors in Norway. *Samhandling* has been an important concept in a recent reform relating to primary health care and secondary health services. In addition, the word *partnerskap* (partnership) was used extensively in welfare reform (the NAV reform) taking place in the first decade of the 21st century (see Lægreid and Rykkja, 2014), which may indicate European influence since 'partnership' is key principle of European funding mechanisms (Demidov 2014). For service delivery in different sectors, it is public-private partnerships or citizen co-creation that are the chosen terms, employed especially frequently in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK.

Words are also linked to specific reform efforts, since collaborative efforts are often both necessary components and key targets when governments launch ambitious new programs. In France, 'open

government' is discussed in relation to the issues of "modernisation de l'Etat" (literally state modernization or public administration modernization) and "simplification". The term 'modernisation' is nothing new - it could be argued that it goes back to the post WW2 period when the French government launched several reforms to reorganize the private and the public sector as well as the public administration. But the 2007 reform (*Révision générale des politiques publiques* - General review of public policies) led to a wide discussion around the issue of state modernisation, in particular the transformations of public administration toward increased cooperation between state services and better quality of public service for users. Simplification measures were launched by President Hollande in March 2013. Governmental communication emphasized the idea of a 'simplification shock'. The measures aim at simplifying the relationships between public administration and citizens on the one hand, and firms on the other hand. 'Modernization' and 'simplification' then frequently appear also in legal and administrative documents, that often come as 'law packages', since especially in Civil Law systems such change may require new laws as well as revising and amending existing ones. In addition to France, this is also evident in the approach of Spain, especially with relation to comprehensive strategies specifically dedicated to digital reforms of public administration with intended or unintended effects on collaborative practices. The linkage to digitalization reforms is even more evident in policy documents (government and think tank reports) than in the scholarly literature.

While the public administration literature and sector-based literature using the collaborative governance concept have not engaged much with what the introduction of new ICT technologies mean for the dynamics of collaborative arrangements, it is clear that among policy-makers much hope is placed on this. For instance, a German document discusses how 'with the help of on-line petitions, the democratic participation of citizens is strengthened' and how new formats like 'hackathons' can lead to software products of use ford democracy, while this also entails challenges like 'protection of minors, or the support of senior citizens' (Germany 2016, Strategy for Engagement Politics at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth).

In Hungary, public administration reforms that emphasizes collaboration has been closely linked with the availability of European Union funding. In many legal and administrative documents that relates to such funding coordination and cooperation within government (internal collaborative governance) are in focus[8]. In Denmark, the range of terms listed in the previous sections have been increasingly used sine around 2005 to indicate various forms of collaborative governance. Municipal leaders, public sector unions, the regional leaders, and partly some ministries are calling for renewed forms of cooperation/ collaboration to improve the outcomes and value of the public sector activities, in response to perceived erosion of collaboration in the public sector due to New Public Management reforms.

The computer-assisted text analysis of the legal-administrative documents confirmed the focus on central state administration and modernization in France and Spain, which was highlighted earlier. It also drew attention to what seems to be a broader societal and sectoral interpretation of collaboration in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Estonia. In Germany and Belgium, the vertical dimension of collaboration is also apparent, in line with the federal structures of these states (and the vertical dimension is also important in the UK which has had important debates related to devolution).

The systematic coding of the policy documents (government and think tank reviews) and legal and administrative texts (Batory and Svensson 2017; Batory and Svensson 2018a; Batory and Svensson

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8   Notably, important public administration reforms without linkage to the European Union have been carried out in recent years that appear unrelated to Europeanization. The strong (re)centralization of the state combined with increasing politicization may hinder certain types of collaboration.

2018b) allowed for some conclusions about whether the focus when it comes to collaboration in general is on external or internal collaboration, or a combination of both. The latter would imply a comprehensive approach to the many instances where these lines are increasingly blurred (Wright 2000). The topical analysis of legal documents showed that the two realms are still largely separately treated (44% of sources are dedicated to internal collaboration, and 25% to external) but indeed a third of documents (31%) cover aspects of both (albeit often implicitly). Likewise, reports are fragmented, although the focus there is on external collaboration (45%), see figure 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Dominant approaches to collaboration in legal and regulatory frameworks in 10 countries

Figure 2. Dominant approaches to collaboration in reports (grey literature) on collaboration in 10 countries
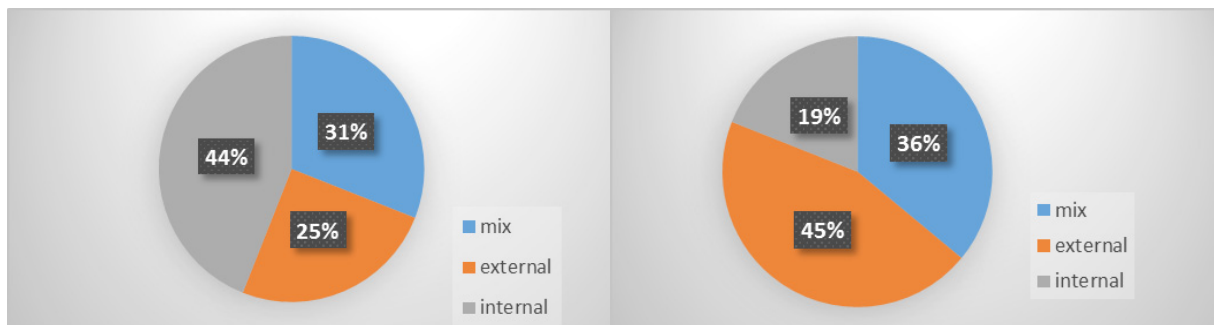
Source: Author. Numbers from Batory and Svensson 2018b: 48)

Moreover, within the portion that is dedicated to external collaboration, those that deal with private-public partnerships vs. those that deal with citizenship inclusion is also largely separate, probably due to one having its roots in new public management (and neo-liberal) ideologies of privatization, and the other in democratization movements. However, while there is no time-series data for this, there are two indications that there might be a shift towards a more comprehensive approach. First, there is significant legislative and administrative activity in the collection that is of recent years, and second, a comparison with the overview of 'grey literature' in the area of collaboration (Batory and Svensson 2017: 14) shows a different distribution. Policy- and practitioner oriented or produced research (think tank, research institute and government reports) focus more attention on external collaboration, which may be the step before codification takes place.

POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL ASSOCIATIONS

Collaborative governance and related terms are generally viewed as positive in the countries under examination. However, this finding comes with a few qualifications.

In countries where the term *collaborative governance* is not generally known a literal translation (for instance in EU documents) may cause different reactions. It may be perceived as neutral, and thus fail to convey the positive image intended by the original document. In Estonia, where 'united governance' is preferred, the terms "collaboration" and "governance" are both common but used separately. Collaboration has a clearly positive meaning, whereas governance is neutral. It may signal

something 'new' or 'progressive'. The Spanish *gobernanza colaborativa* and the associated phenomenon is perceived as relatively new and generally viewed positively, although rarely used by the general public. The Hungarian *együttműködő kormányzás* seems to be a foreign transplant, since it can only be found in some documents that have been translated from EU English sources, or which have heavy EU influence, such as in documents about 'e-governance'. Collaborative governance can also be associated with a new era. In Denmark, *samarbejde* (cooperation or collaboration) has always had a positive value given that institutionalized dialogue and cooperation between state and various interest groups and civil society has been a strong norm. However, there has been increasing concern about collaboration being eroded in the public sector due to New Public management reforms, and collaborative governance would therefore be discussed as a remedy.

In addition to these diverse reactions to the term, two examples of potentially more negative associations are worth highlighting. First, in some languages collaboration has a negative connotation due to it being associated with siding with the enemy during the world wars of the 20th century or siding with an oppressor in communist countries. Such associations were for instance reported from Germany and Hungary. In some Scandinavian languages, the literal word 'collaborator' would be reserved for this type of (negative) behaviour whereas the various nouns and verbs derived from 'cooperate' would be the only positive ones. Secondly, even though 'cooperation' is widely seen as positive, it can also take on more specific meanings linking it to certain political ideologies and activities. In Hungarian government discourse 'cooperation' (*együttműködés)* has been used prominently over the past years. Shortly after Fidesz led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban came to power in 2010, a decree mandated public offices to prominently display a 'Declaration of National Cooperation', to signal the arrival of a new 'System of National Cooperation'. In this context, cooperation refers to the type of unity that a nation can achieve by working together and mobilizing its various resources for the national interest. As used by the Orban government, it has heavy nationalist connotation, so whether this is seen as 'positive' or 'negative' would, in the current polarized Hungarian political landscape, partly depend on political party preferences.

CONCLUSION

Collaborative governance has somewhat of a chameleonic character in English, and capturing its essence in one term in other languages causes even more difficulties due to the tendency of English-language academic and policy language to dominate international discourses and thereby be an object of transfer. Scholars usually use terms that are related to collaborative governance which in turn take on different connotations in the local language. Based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of government and non-government reports, legal and administrative texts and expert input from ten different European countries representing different public administration traditions, it has been established that there is considerable diversity in understandings across European countries, but less across different groups of users within national contexts (academia, policy-makers, private sector and citizens). As noted above, though, discussion documents around collaboration is more tilted towards external collaboration, whether lawmakers focus on internal collaboration. In general, different versions of the terms networks,

steering, governance and coordination seem ubiquitous. The usage among policy-makers and broader public discourse appears more mixed: while the literal translation 'collaborative governance' is largely absent from the debate in most countries, some countries have prominent and long-standing discussions around related concepts (e.g. *Zusammenarbeit*, *Partizipation* or *Beteiligung* in German, *samstyring* or *samordning* in Norwegian), and in other countries this discussion is relatively new (e.g. Spain, France) and/or not of high salience in public discourse (e.g. Estonia, Hungary). Understandings of collaborative government in policy discourses largely overlap with academic writing, although often without using the specific term 'collaborative governance'. However, in both domains conceptual confusion abound. Even within the same country contexts, multiple terms are often used for describing similar practices.

Importantly, collaboration is associated with different public administration reforms. Thus, the national connotations of collaboration vary reflecting the context and major aims of reforms. For instance, in France, collaboration is tied with the notion of modernisation and simplification, both motivated by technological change and a desire to improve citizens' experience of government. In Norway, digitalisation seems to be the leading theme. The Danish *samarbejde* (collaboration/cooperation) is seen to be eroding due to NPM reforms, and an important objective of post-NPM reforms is therefore to bring *samarbejde* back in. In the UK, the thrust of change is tied in with devolution, in Germany and Belgium it is related to the interconnections of levels of government, and in Hungary it relates to recent political changes.

Overall, collaborative governance is generally viewed positively: collaboration is seen as something that enhances government's ability to reach diverse policy goals. At the same time, lingering associations with collaboration as 'fraternization with the enemy' may conjure unwanted images for those who deploy this language, the language of cooperation can also be a vehicle to pursue nationalist agendas.

This working paper started by noting the importance attached to collaborative governance by leading politicians of European institutions, and how that is currently reflected in the type of research being pursued. Overall, the findings of the paper draw attention to the importance of being aware of the divergence of linguistic practice and national connotations in order to fully understand and be able to compare collaborative governance across European counties. For proponents of collaborative governance, it is also important to know that how to speak about this, as least for now, should be adapted to different country settings, unless risk unwanted or uninformed connotations.

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