

Citizens and the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance

An administrative burden perspective

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Is collaborative governance “democracy-enhancing” and does it generate legitimacy? Drawing from the literatures on administrative burden and policy feedbacks and a positive approach to legitimacy, this theoretical article studies how the institutional design of collaborative governance impacts on the legitimacy citizens grant the state and the bureaucracy. It argues that three legitimacy-enhancing effects based on targeting, deliberation and exposure are likely providing that a specific set of institutional features is present. This article invites scholars and practitioners to reflect not only on the direct consequences of collaborative governance but also on its broader democratic outcomes.

Keywords: Collaborative governance; legitimacy; administrative burden; policy feedback

Introduction

Collaborative governance as a specific type of policy making has been discussed as having the potential to solve long-standing issues, from wicked problems to the democratic deficit (Provan and Kenis 2007, Torfing et al. 2012, Torfing and Triantafillou 2011, Warren 2009). Collaborative governance refers to collective decision-making arrangements that rest upon consensus-oriented and deliberative processes engaging state institutions with ordinary citizens or other non-governmental actors (Ansell and Gash 2008, 544). Collaborative governance may thus contribute to reshaping state-citizens interactions and, thereby, may yield significant consequences in terms of legitimacy outcomes. A key question is therefore to investigate if collaborative governance impacts on the legitimacy that citizens grant not only this specific process of decision-making, but also, more generally, the state and the bureaucracy. In this theoretical article, we study how the institutional design of collaborative governance impacts on the state’s and the bureaucracy’s legitimacy from a citizen’s perspective, what we refer to as the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance.

So far, it has been shown that citizens' participation within collaborative governance may be conducive to higher levels of legitimacy of collaborative governance, providing that the scope of participation is not too limited (Daugberg and Fawcett 2017, Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015). Alongside individual-level factors, the design of collaborative governance and the collaborative process itself are reported to impact on citizens' participation, and thereby to mediate collaborative governance's legitimacy outcomes (Isett and Miranda 2015, Ansell et al. 2020).

These studies pave the way to account for the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from a citizen's perspective by illuminating the role played by institutional factors. However, our understanding remains limited when it comes to the mechanisms at play and their effects. In particular, what is missing is a theoretical account of how institutional features of collaborative governance and the collaborative process affect the legitimacy citizens grant this type of decision-making, the state and the bureaucracy. In addition, while debates on collaborative governance being 'democracy-enhancing' have been pervasive, there is little research that has investigated its actual legitimacy outcomes from the perspective of ordinary citizens. Not only do we know little about what drive citizens' own legitimacy assessments as virtually all the literature draws from normative benchmarks derived from democratic theories; but existing research is also limited to the legitimacy of collaborative governance as such, and overlooks broader democratic legitimacy outcomes. This article tackles both limitations.

We show that the literatures on administrative burden and policy feedbacks offer analytical traction to study how experienced collaborative governance may impact on citizens' legitimacy assessments of the state and the bureaucracy (Campbell 2012, Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen 2014, Moynihan, Herd, and Rigby 2016, Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2014, Peeters 2020). From these scholarships, we derive a two-step

explanation of how collaborative governance may shape citizens' assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy: first, specific institutional features are likely to mitigate the administrative burdens generated by bureaucratic encounters as it reshapes how citizens experience state-citizens interactions. These burdens are a function of institutional features which trigger specific learning, psychological and compliance costs that citizens bear (Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2014, Peeters 2020). Providing that these institutional features of collaborative governance are present, we expect that they alleviate the different costs of state-citizens interactions through the deliberate attempts by state officials to engage in coproduction and consider ordinary citizens as partners. Second, these experiences generate cues that feed back into citizens' assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy (Mettler 2011, Pierson 1993). Specifically, we expect three types of legitimacy-enhancing effects to result from collaborative governance based, respectively, on the targeting of participating citizens, the deliberation between public officials, stakeholders, elected politicians and ordinary citizens and the exposure to a collaborative decision-making process. Overall, we argue that three institutional features are theoretically of crucial importance when it comes to assessing the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from the perspective of participating citizens: the deliberate and active inclusion of ordinary citizens as participants of collaborative governance, an open process of collaboration where participating citizens are considered as partners by involved public officials and politicians and, last, thick communicative and deliberative relations between participants of collaborative governance.

Our explanation pertains to the fact that because collaborative governance is geared toward the inclusion of ordinary citizens in decision-making, is an open approach to policy design and conveys meanings and worldviews related to one's position in the political community, it may "create a new politics" (Schattschneider 1935, 288) to which

citizens may adapt their legitimacy assessments of the state and the bureaucracy. As it is grounded on citizens' experiences and the information they derive from it, our explanation is embedded in a positive definition of legitimacy, meaning that legitimacy assessments are based on citizens' own criteria and not scholarly normative ones. This approach is opposed to the normative perspective of legitimacy, where a "social scientist expects legitimacy to rest on objective bases which he or she can detect as existent, waning, or absent" in a given situation (Abromeit and Stoiber 2007, 35).

Our contributions in this article are threefold. First, we bridge the scholarships on collaborative governance, administrative burden and policy feedbacks to advance the study of the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from the perspective of ordinary citizens. Doing so allows for a finer-grained account of the institutional features that drive citizens' assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy. Second, we import a subjective, that is positive, definition of legitimacy in the collaborative governance literature. While this body of research primarily draws from normative criteria to assess the legitimacy of collaborative governance, this article suggests that adopting actors' own criteria offers traction to assess collaborative governance's broader legitimacy outcomes, namely the state's and the bureaucracy's. Last, we complement recent advances by studies of administrative burden by pointing at the relationship between institutional features and the individual-level foundations of citizens' legitimacy assessments.

In the remainder of the paper, the first section discusses the state of the art. The second section then introduces our approach, which we apply to collaborative governance in the third section. The conclusion summarizes our theoretical propositions and discusses their implications for empirical research.

1. Legitimacy, collaborative governance and citizens: A state of the art

High expectations are attached to collaborative governance as a specific type of administrative arrangement which “directly engag[es] non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented and deliberative, and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets” (Ansell and Gash 2008, 544). Its outputs are supposed to outperform siloed administrations’ or new public management organizations’ in terms of tackling wicked problems, delivering value-for-money or sheer effectiveness (Benington and Moore 2011, Provan and Kenis 2007, Torfing et al. 2012, Laegreid et al. 2014, Laegreid 2015). In other words, collaborative governance is expected to display a “collaborative advantage” (Doberstein 2016). Collaborative governance’s democratic outcomes have also raised scholarly attention and discussions about whether, and the conditions under which, it may be “democracy-enhancing” (Sorensen and Torfing 2020) have surged (e.g. Warren 2009, Torfing and Triantafillou 2011). A strand of the debate has focused on the issue of its legitimacy, as we do in this article. While the concept of legitimacy is widely used in different contexts and has been interpreted in various ways (Alexander, Doorn, and Priest 2018), here, we understand legitimacy as “the popular acceptance of a governing regime or system of governance” (Blatter 2007, 518). In this section, we contrast the stakes raised by collaborative governance in terms of citizens’ involvement and public sector legitimacy with the observation that there is only scarce research that reports rather mixed results.

Collaborative governance is tightly associated to debates about democracy as politicians, along with public administration scholars, have framed it as possible sites for improved democratic processes (Warren 2009), as an additional layer or next to more-hierarchical and less-inclusive policymaking and implementation processes (Sorensen

and Torfing 2009, Torfing et al. 2012, Sorensen and Torfing 2020, Klijn and Skelcher 2007). In some instances, collaborative governance arrangements have even been presented as a response to the growing gap between the state and the citizens, as well as to the equally increasing critical views of the public sector, bureaucratic processes and policymaking (Batory and Svensson 2019, Papadopoulos 2013). Some even discuss the possibilities of governance-driven democratization (Warren 2009). The main rationale shared by most research “implicitly hold[s] onto the democratic norm that legitimacy can be strengthened when citizens and other relevant stakeholders have the opportunity to have their views heard and taken into account, when they receive sound and trustworthy accounts of the governance process, and when governance outputs address their interests and needs.” (Sorensen et al. 2020, 3-4, see also Warren 2009). So, the question that arises is whether collaborative governance lives up to these expectations, in particular with respect to ordinary citizens. Does collaborative governance contribute to improving citizens’ evaluations of the state’s and the bureaucracy’s legitimacy?

Overall, research offers only scarce responses. It appears to be a complex task to assess the outcome of collaborative governance defined in terms of legitimacy, including from the perspective of concerned citizens. The contributors to a recently-built open database on collaborative governance cases admit that they know the least on the outputs and outcomes of the case they studied (Douglas et al. 2020). Specifically focused on citizens and their role in co-production, Voorberg and colleagues echo these observations (2015). Based on a systematic review of existing scholarship, they report that most research does overlook outcomes of co-creation processes with citizens to the benefit of the analysis of processes of co-production or typologies of co-creation. Among the works which are designed to study the outcomes of citizens’ role in coproduction, the main emphasis is on the study of effectiveness and patterns of citizens’ involvement (Voorberg,

Bekkers, and Tummers 2015, 1345). Interestingly, legitimacy as an outcome is not even included in the list of outcomes studied in the existing scholarship reviewed by Voorberg and colleagues. In sum, discussions of the expected outcomes of collaborative governance at the level of citizens prevail over their actual empirical examination. This is unexpected given “the theoretical importance placed on involving non-state actors, negotiating conflicts, and pragmatically achieving goals (...)” (Douglas et al. 2020, 8).

Research that does study the legitimacy of collaborative governance, including from a citizen’s perspective, reports mixed results. There appears to be a tension between input and output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999). In general, input legitimacy refers to normative criteria concerning the evaluation of the conditions under which decisions are made, as well as the characteristics of decision-making procedures. It relates to notions of representation but also participation or transparency. Input legitimacy thus concerns the foundations on which decisions rest on or depend on. Output legitimacy relates to the appraisal of the relevance and quality of institutions and institutional arrangements’ outputs. It refers to the evaluation – by different audiences, such as groups of citizens, stakeholders or scholars – of the outputs of a given decision or institutional arrangement.

Existing research reports that while collaborative governance is shown to display a significant potential to increase input legitimacy under specific conditions, it appears to fulfil only parts of its promises. Overall, the contributors to the Collaborative governance databank who studied the “extent to which the collaboration increase legitimacy among stakeholders” evaluated this legitimacy-enhancing effect as low (Douglas et al. 2020). Regarding input legitimacy, a focal point of the debate pertains to who is actually included and takes part in collaborative governance. There is evidence that the inclusion of otherwise overlooked categories of actors, including ordinary citizens, strengthens these participants’ evaluation of the collaborative process’ input legitimacy (Daugberg

and Fawcett 2017, Scharpf 1999). In collaborative governance, the issue is that the scope of citizens who actually participate is fairly limited (Moss and Coleman 2014, Warren 2009, Isett and Miranda 2015). Specifically, research into participatory and deliberative governance (Sorensen et al. 2020) reports that participating citizens are not representative of the broader population as they display a higher level of socio-economic and politically relevant resources than non-participating citizens (Jacquet 2017, Isett and Miranda 2015).

In addition to individual-level factors of participation to collaborative governance, the scholarship has also studied how institutional factors may support citizens' participation, thereby influencing collaborative governance's input legitimacy. Two broad factors are deemed influential in that respect: "the design and conduct of collaboration" (Ansell et al. 2020, 4). Regarding design, Voorberg and colleagues show that the compatibility of public organization with citizen participation is one of the most influential factors (2015). It refers both to the "presence or absence of inviting organizational structures and procedures" and to "the presence or absence of a decent infrastructure to communicate with citizens" (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015, 1342). This is also confirmed by other scholars (Isett and Miranda 2015). Ansell and colleagues specifically tie this to the specific policy goals pursued by the public administration in charge (2020). Scholars of citizens' participation to collaborative governance report that the process of collaboration itself is influential as well. Voorberg et al. suggest that an open attitude towards citizen participation on the part of public officials is a significant explanation of citizens' participation to collaborative governance (2015). The role of process management and leadership of collaboration is further analysed by Ansell et al. (2020, see also Johnston et al. 2010) who suggest that "purposefully building up trust and commitment over time" is key to the actual inclusion of participants.

In contrast, the output legitimacy of collaborative governance is less debated and more positively assessed than its input legitimacy. However, the positive evaluation of collaborative governance's output legitimacy depends on the inclusion of not-that-large groups of stakeholders: larger groups are likely to result in negative assessments of collaborative governance' output legitimacy (Doberstein 2013, Doberstein and Millar 2014, Daugberg and Fawcett 2017). As evidenced by Peter Triantafillou and Magnus Paulsen Hansen, input and output legitimacy of collaborative governance may go in opposite directions indeed (2020). While improving the conditions under which decisions are made in collaborative arrangements, such as including a larger group of actors, is likely to increase their input legitimacy, it may not necessarily result in a better decision as assessed by various groups of stakeholders, and may even lead to sub-optimal solutions. Also, to our knowledge, no specific assessment of collaborative governance's output legitimacy from the perspective of ordinary citizens has been reported.

In sum, it has been established that citizens' participation is key to collaborative governance's input legitimacy. The limited scholarship that has tackled this issue reports that institutional factors, in the form of design and process of collaborative governance, mediate their participation. In addition, this body of scholarship that considers ordinary citizens as one group of participating actors mostly relies on the norms related to electoral laws and procedures as a normative benchmark to assess the legitimacy of collaborative governance— hence the focus on input legitimacy. In Triantafillou and Hansen's words, collaborative governance's legitimacy is assessed from the perspective of electoral state citizens (see Paulsen Hansen and Triantafillou 2021 for a full discussion). Interestingly also, the existing scholarship approaches the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from a rather narrow perspective. It considers exclusively the legitimacy of collaborative governance as a specific type of decision-making. Yet, the normative

debates raised by collaborative governance would call for an assessment of whether and how collaborative governance is instrumental in addressing broader democratic legitimacy issues. In that regard, there is a mismatch between the normative debates and how collaborative governance's legitimacy outcomes have been approached.

Thereby, two questions remain unanswered: first, we know little about the mechanisms at play and their effects. We miss a theoretical account of how institutional features of collaborative governance and the collaborative process affect citizens' legitimacy assessments. Second, less is known about the broader legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from a citizen's perspective, namely how it affects ordinary citizens' assessment of the legitimacy of the bureaucracy and the state, in their own terms and not normative benchmarks.

2. Understanding legitimacy outcomes through the lens of policy feedbacks and administrative burdens

To address both gaps, we suggest to adopt a subjective, and positive, definition of legitimacy and, thereby, depart from the prevailing objective, and normative, definition. We also combine the scholarships on policy feedback and administrative burden to study collaborative governance's legitimacy outcomes from a citizen's perspective.

Engaging in the analysis of the legitimacy of any regime or system of governance like that of collaborative governance requires scholars to position themselves with respect to the epistemological distinction between the normative and the positive definitions of the concept (Blatter 2007, Hurrelmann, Schneider, and Steffek 2007). Virtually all research on the legitimacy of collaborative governance draws from a normative conception of legitimacy (for a full discussion of this approach, see Abromeit and Stoiber 2007; Hurrelmann, Schneider, and Steffek 2007). Scholars have used two main normative

criteria: electoral norms on the one hand, and norms related to dynamics of peer or social accountability on the other hand (Triantafillou and Hansen, 2021). By applying these benchmarks to existing collaborative arrangements, scholars are able to assess their legitimacy.

In this approach though, the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from the perspective of ordinary citizens are overlooked. To study them, social scientists are to act as observers of actors' own legitimacy evaluations of systems of governance, in contrast to assessing them themselves. This is the positive, or subjective, perspective on legitimacy. Adopting a positive conceptualization of collaborative governance's legitimacy thereby rests on studying actors' perceptions. Following Max Weber (1978), the aim is to understand the norms and ideas that influence social interactions, and identify how actors assimilate and use these norms and ideas to accept (or not) a governing regime or a system of governance like collaborative governance. In that sense, in a positive approach to the legitimacy of collaborative governance, a decisive question is whether different groups of actors, such as ordinary citizens, believe in the legitimacy of this type of decision-making and of the regime they live in (see also Barker 2001). In that regard, legitimacy is "nothing more nor less than the belief in it – a quality that, like beauty, only exists in the eye of the beholder" (Abromeit and Stoiber 2007, 35).

Delineating the groups of actors – or more precisely, the audience of collaborative governance – to be analysed is thus crucial. Each collaborative arrangement has multiple audiences including participating citizens, citizens who do not participate, public officials, and elected politicians who may or may not participate to collaborative governance. An audience is a group of actors which is aware of the process and the outputs of this arrangement and may perceive differently the legitimacy outcomes of a given collaborative process because they are embedded in a specific context. In principle,

each audience – participating or not to collaborative arrangements – could be studied in an analysis of collaborative governance’s legitimacy outcomes. In this article, we focus on the perspective of participating citizens, who are involved in collaborative governance as ‘users’, ‘participants’ or ‘partners’.

How then to study the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from the perspective of participating citizens? In line with other research (Soss 2002, 1999, Mettler and Soss 2004, Moynihan and Herd 2010, Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2014, Campbell 2012), we suggest that a substantial part of the explanation lies in their experience of state-citizens interactions during collaborative governance.

Research on policy feedbacks offers a stimulating theoretical framework to understand how citizens’ experiences of their interactions with the state could impact the legitimacy they grant the bureaucracy and the state more generally. This literature intends to explain how institutions and policies, as citizens experience them, contribute to shaping their political attitudes and behaviours, and under what conditions such effects may occur (for a review see Larsen 2019, Campbell 2012, seminal research include Mettler 2005, Soss 2002, Lerman and Weaver 2004, Campbell 2003). The core idea is that institutions and policies are not only outputs of political systems; they also impact (‘feed back into’) mass publics and can thus be considered as inputs too. Specifically, policy feedback studies highlight how citizens’ experiences of institutions and policies provide cues that citizens’ draw from to assess the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy. The positive approach to the notion of legitimacy is supported by the focus on citizens’ experiences. This scholarship elaborates on several mechanisms that connect institutional features of decision-making and implementation to citizens’ legitimacy assessments, two of which

are of specific relevance to our study¹. The interpretive mechanism relates to the fact that decision-making and policies convey information and messages and the visibility mechanism refers to the visibility of state action – both are consequential for citizens’ political attitudes and evaluations of the state and the bureaucracy (Mettler and Welch 2004).

As a complement to, and theoretically derived from the policy feedback scholarship, the literature on administrative burden allows to take a further step by focusing specifically on citizens’ experiences with public officials during collaborative governance. Thanks to its emphasis on bureaucratic encounters, defined as any transaction involving bureaucrats and clients, whether the transaction was initiated by the clients or by bureaucrats (Kahn, Katz, and Gutek 1976), this strand of research offers a good grasp at what is at play in the process of collaborative governance and, thereby, strengthens the analysis of their “immediate and longer-term outcomes” (Heinrich 2016, 2) (Wichowsky and Moynihan 2008, Mettler and Soss 2004) (Moynihan and Herd 2010, Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2014).

This body of scholarship has studied how bureaucratic encounters may result in administrative burdens from a citizen’s perspective, that is, “an individual’s experience

¹ In addition to the interpretive and the visibility mechanisms that are discussed specifically in the third section, the literature has illuminated a resource effect, that is “how resources and incentives provided by policies shape patterns of behaviour” (Mettler and Welsh 2004, 500), as well as a traceability mechanism pertaining to the fact that “the electorate must be able to link that outcome to some governmental action” (Pierson 1993, 622). We include neither of these mechanisms as they may be triggered during policy implementation. In this article in contrast, we focus specifically on policymaking.

of policy implementation as onerous” (Burden et al. 2012, 742). These burdens stem not only from organizational processes but also have “policy roots” (Heinrich 2016, 4). On the one hand, they can be “either deliberate or unplanned” (Peeters 2020, 571), that is that policymakers may attempt at intentionally building in the policy barriers to restrict access and take up, or not. Intentionality is thereby a first explanation of the causes of administrative burdens. On the other hand, administrative burdens may stem from policy design or “can emerge as a result of bureaucrats’ behaviour and coping mechanisms” (Peeters 2020, 571). As a consequence, this body of work has investigated how the design features of institutional arrangements and their related process, like collaborative governance, may generate or lessen the costs faced by citizens in their encounters with state officials.

Overall, both the administrative burden and the policy feedback scholarships suggest that citizens’ experiences of collaborative governance will impact on their legitimacy assessments, not only of this type of decision-making, but also that of the state and the bureaucracy more generally (from another theoretical perspective, see also Isett and Miranda 2015, Kang and Van Ryzin 2019 for a similar emphasis, Berg and Johansson 2020).

3. Explaining collaborative governance legitimacy-building effects: a two-step model

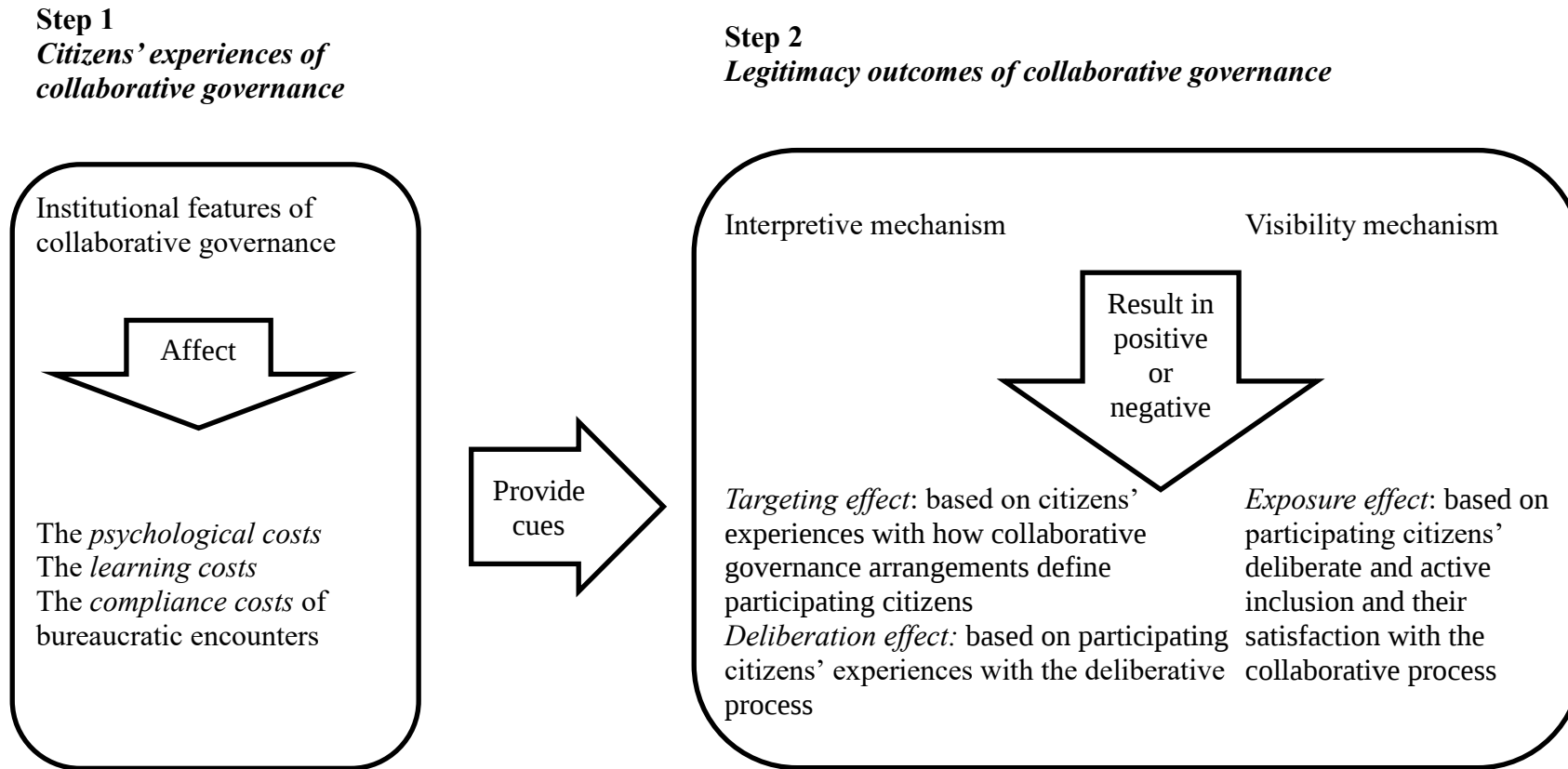
Starting from the approach presented in the previous section, we present our two-step model and, first, examine the institutional features of collaborative governance that matter in state-citizens interactions and discuss the administrative burdens they are likely to be associated with from a participating citizens’ perspective. Second, we investigate the cues participating citizens are likely to derive from their experiences in the course of collaborative governance and the legitimacy-building effects that may result from them.

Our article is theoretical and we recognize that collaborative governance takes a variety of empirical forms. As a consequence, we also discuss in this section how citizens' experiences during collaborative governance and the cues they derive from them are conditional upon specific institutional features. Theoretically, three of these institutional features are of critical importance: (i) the deliberate and active inclusion of ordinary citizens as participants of collaborative governance, (ii) an open process of collaboration where participating citizens are considered as partners by involved public officials and politicians and, last, (iii) thick communicative and deliberative relations between participants of collaborative governance.

Based on our two-step model, and providing that these specific institutional features are present, we expect that collaborative governance alleviates the cost of state-citizens interactions from the perspective of participating citizens. From these experiences, we also expect that the cues citizens derive based on the operation of the interpretive and the visibility mechanisms are legitimacy-building. Specifically, we expect three legitimacy-enhancing effects of collaborative governance from a participating citizens' perspective: a targeting effect, a deliberation effect and an exposure effect. We present in turn our analysis of both steps of this argument as summarized in figure 1.

[INSERT Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1. A two-step approach to analyse collaborative governance's impacts on the legitimacy citizens grant the state and the bureaucracy



Step 1: Collaborative governance and the conditional alleviation of administrative burdens

Moynihan and colleagues conceptualize that bureaucratic encounters may generate three costs for concerned citizens (2014). We start with discussing psychological costs. These costs relate to the participation to unpopular programmes and the stigma associated to it. Psychological costs are observed and grow as the target population is defined as undeserving. They are likely to deter citizens' participation to these programmes and to increase non-take-up. In policy design, the target population is defined by clear and objective eligibility criteria. However, the target population is also socially constructed and includes positive or negative social connotations about its deservingness (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 1997). In a cross-policy sector comparative analysis of administrative burdens in the United States, Pamela Herd and Daniel Moynihan report that conceptions of deservingness, alongside the distribution of political power across groups, are significantly associated to "how burdens are imposed on citizens. Citizens who are poor, powerless, and seen as underserving can expect to spend their lives struggling against burdens in their encounters with the state" (2018, 246).

There are policy sectors, like welfare and health policy, where costs are deliberately imposed by policymakers and politically justified by the undeservingness of the target populations. They are intentionally built in the policy design by policy makers as a way to differ, prevent or complicate access by targeted groups of ordinary citizens (Herd et al. 2013, Moynihan, Herd, and Rigby 2016, Peeters 2020, Herd and Moynihan 2018). Deliberately designing policies to raise the experienced psychological costs by the target population is "policymaking by other means" (Moynihan, Herd, and Rigby 2016). Deliberately mitigating these costs is yet another form that this type of policymaking can take. Herd and Moynihan have evidenced that specific policy instruments can be

intentionally selected by policymakers to ease access and improve take-up (2018). As an illustration of cost alleviation, Herd and colleagues studies of Medicaid take-up in Wisconsin reports that marketing and branding, like community outreach, resulted in a reduction of psychological costs (2013).

On both dimensions, namely the definition of target population and politicians' intentions, collaborative governance is likely to alleviate the psychological costs experienced by participating citizens. First, as made obvious by extensive research, collaborative governance has been developed and introduced in various governmental settings across established democracies and developing countries (Heinrich 2016) on the premise that ordinary citizens and non-governmental actors should be included to improve decision-making. The deliberate inclusion of ordinary citizens is predicated on a broad defence of democracy that value the inputs of citizens as end users of public decisions and policies (on the relationships between political values, specifically partisan ideologies, and the design of administrative burdens, see Herd and Moynihan 2018). In that sense, collaborative governance undeniably falls in the group of policymaking types intentionally designed to lower barriers of participation by ordinary citizens.

Second, collaborative governance is also built on the idea that ordinary citizens have worthy inputs to make to decision-making. In essence, collaborative governance constructs citizens as deserving target population whose participation to decision-making is likely to foster efficiency and, generally speaking, add value to decision-making. The implementation of this idea is key to the degree of psychological costs participants will experience. If leaders actually conduct the collaborative process in such a way that citizens are treated as partners whose views and opinions are considered, it can be expected that psychological costs will be alleviated. Trust-building is crucial in that respect (Ansell and Gash 2008). On the contrary, if citizens are not actually included and

if the process of collaboration is only intended to provide legitimation to a decision already supported by specific stakeholders or previously made by politicians and public officials, the psychological costs are unlikely to be alleviated (Boussaguet 2016). Overall, the basic institutional features of collaborative governance, namely the deliberate inclusion of ordinary citizens as partners, are likely to alleviate the psychological costs they experience in the bureaucratic encounters, but this is conditional on several specifications discussed above.

Learning costs are another type of costs that ordinary citizens may experience when interacting with bureaucrats. They relate to the activities citizens need to engage in to collect information about the public programmes and services they may benefit from (Moynihan et al., 2014). These costs capture the time and effort citizens have to spend to ascertain their eligibility status and the requirements they must comply with (Herd & Moynihan, 2018, p. 23–24). Learning costs affect citizens' take up of available benefits in different ways. They may ignore the very existence of programmes or services or, even if concerned citizens know about them, they do not automatically know either whether they are eligible to claim the attached benefits, or the specific requirements to fulfil. The learning costs are partly accounted for by individual-level factors (Herd and Moynihan 2018, Heckman and Smith 2004, Chudnovsky and Peeters 2020). They also are predicated on the design of programs and policies. Specifically, outreach actions and actions to increase the availability and clarity of information have been reported to alleviate the learning costs faced by citizens (Herd et al. 2013, Moynihan, Herd, and Rigby 2016, Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey 2014). Through a field experiment, Bhargava and Manoli show for instance that information efforts such as sending mails, and simplification measures result in increases of take up (2015).

In light of previous research, we expect that collaborative governance may contribute to mitigating learning costs borne by citizens because of its inclusive design. Inclusion in collaborative governance refers to the extent to which collaborative processes include a range of different participants, whether they are citizens with different profiles or stakeholders (e.g. organisations representing the interests of different sectors or causes). As collaborative governance is a network-driven process, rather than state-centric, inclusion is one of its key features. The strategic inclusion of citizens, “with ‘selective activation’ of participants depending on functional and pragmatic choices” as advocated by Ansell and colleagues (2020), may be conducive to the alleviation of learning costs for citizens. By valuing their inputs, and particularly that of eligible and targeted citizens, collaborative governance may result in programs and policies designed to be accessible and clear to the target population. The inclusion of citizens as end users of public decisions and policies is also likely to reduce the unintended consequences of implementation and formal procedures deriving from policy design (Peeters, 2020). Yet, inclusion brings advantages as well as drawbacks, which depend on the patterns and conditions of inclusion in collaborative governance arrangements (Ansell et al. 2020). Through the knowledge, experiences and resources brought in by participants, greater inclusion can generate richer deliberation and learning among partners and increase the chance that all relevant issues are covered during discussions. On the contrary, a wide inclusion may also increase transaction costs and reduce the quality of deliberation between the participants to collaborative processes (Ansell et al. 2020).

The last type of burden that bureaucratic encounters may generate for citizens is compliance costs. They are defined by Moynihan, Herd, and Harvey (2014) as the efforts to follow administrative rules and requirements to benefit from a public service or programme. The time and effort necessary to comply with procedural requirements – such

as completing forms or providing documentation to prove one's eligibility – play a role in citizens' decision to claim benefits. In their analysis of Medicaid in the State of Wisconsin, Herd et al. (2013) show that measures that decreased compliance costs such as auto-enrollment of presumptively eligible citizens, the streamlining of application processes with online tools or the provision of one-on-one assistance to applicants, contributed to increase take-up.

Two main issues are related to compliance costs from the perspective of citizens. The first one is their magnitude: reducing compliance costs increases take up (Herd et al. 2013). The second one refers to “whose shoulders the program's design and administrative practices place the administrative burden” on (Daigneault & Macé 2020, 528–529). By shifting the compliance costs from citizens to the state (e.g. with public agents responsible to verify citizens eligibility or insuring intra-administration transfer of information), programmes' design can significantly increase take-up by citizens (Herd et al. 2013).

The institutional features of collaborative governance may address both issues. If deliberative theories are characterized by different understandings of what deliberation is (for an overview Bächtiger et al. 2010), we understand collaborative governance as a process that allows deliberation in the sense that participants engage in thick communicative relations. All participants are invited to (equally) present their experiences and positions and exchange views, while keeping in mind the objective to reach a decision geared toward satisfying all participating parties. First, collaborative governance may allow to reduce the magnitude of compliance costs by including the perspective of citizens upstream in the decision-making. By making visible experiences from future users or potentially eligible individuals, the deliberative dimension of collaborative governance may lead to policies or programs designed to prevent the

difficulties users may encounter when they have to fulfil requirements related to these policies or programs. The same reasoning applies for the inclusion of agents in charge of the implementation of the programme. Also, by means of deliberation, which involves the exchange of information between users and policymakers, both groups of actors get aware of the situations of each other. By participating to collaborative governance, decision makers, public officials, as well as participating citizens also can learn from other partners and may develop more positive attitudes towards each other, beyond the sole issue discussed during collaboration (Jones and Einsiedel 2011). Finally, through consensus-building, citizens and policy makers may find a balance between the administrative burden that are borne by citizens and administrative tasks that are borne by the state and bureaucrats. However, this mitigation of compliance costs actually hinges on collaborative governance being in fact an open and deliberative process. If deliberation is captured by some or unfolds in a way that does not allow for each participant, including citizens, to contribute to the collective discussion, the collaborative process would fail to include these sidelined participants' point of view. On top of this condition pertaining to the process of collaboration, individual-level characteristics of participants also matter. There is a debate on the extent to which less-educated citizens find it difficult to engage in collective deliberations (Gerber et al. 2018, Sanders 1997, Dutwin 2003).

Step 2: The conditional legitimacy-enhancing outcomes of citizens' experiences of collaborative governance

We thereby expect that the costs of bureaucratic encounters are lessened from the perspective of citizens participating to collaborative governance when specific institutional characteristics are present. Following our two-step model, let us now turn to the cues we expect them to derive from their experience of collaborative governance, the

mechanisms at stake and the effects on the legitimacy participating citizens grant the state and the bureaucracy.

First, when collaborative governance arrangements deliberately include citizens as participants and when the former are organized in such a way that participating citizens' inputs are valued, a general positive definition of participating citizens prevail. Through the operation of an interpretive mechanism, we expect that their experiences with collaborative governance featuring these institutional characteristics result in positive legitimacy outcomes for the state and the bureaucracy. We refer to these specific outcomes as a targeting effect. Such a targeting effect thereby rests upon citizens' experiences with how collaborative governance arrangements define participating citizens and include them in deliberative processes. This effect is expected to be positive if citizens are considered by politicians and stakeholders as co-decision-makers rather than mere consultants (Niessen 2019).

In general, the interpretive mechanism relates to the observation that decision-making and policies convey information and messages that are consequential for citizens' political attitudes and evaluations of the state and the bureaucracy (Mettler and Welch 2004). It relies on how the target population is defined and socially constructed (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 1997, Herd and Moynihan 2018), that is, whether the target population is framed as deserving and worthy or not. The seminal case of this mechanism is provided by American veterans who benefited from the GI Bill and who became active citizens not only on the basis of the resources that education provided them with, but also due to a feeling of being considered as worthy citizens, greatly supported by their community and who wanted to give back to that community (Mettler, 2005). In contrast, experiences of policies that frame their recipients or target population as undeserving and untrustworthy feed a sense of political alienation and the idea that decision-making works

against “people like us”. A study of young African-Americans living in poor neighbourhoods demonstrates that their racially-biased experiences with the criminal justice system convey information about the state wanting to “keep them in line”, and not only not helping them but being “adversarial” (Lerman and Weaver 2004). As a result, the cues they derive from their experiences feed “the belief that formal political decision-making is impenetrable to the average citizen” (Lerman and Weaver 2004, 15), which result in strong negative views about the state and its legitimacy. Similarly, Watson’s comparative study of social programmes in England that vary on the degree of stigmatization of target populations shows that the perception of social stigma associated to social assistance measures depresses beneficiaries’ sense of self-worth, their political efficacy, as well as their appreciation of the role of the state (2015). These effects are even stronger when the measures are conditional as conditionality frames beneficiaries as having a low work ethics. Overall, there are converging insights that support our expectation that when collaborative governance arrangements use a positive definition of participating citizens, by actively including them and considering them as partners in the course of collaboration, a legitimacy-enhancing targeting effect of collaborative governance is likely from the perspective of participating citizens.

Second, when collaborative arrangements as a type of decision-making process prominently feature consensus-building and thick deliberative relations, we expect that participating citizens’ experiences with them result in positive legitimacy outcomes for the state and the bureaucracy in the form of a deliberation effect. This deliberation effect is based on participating citizens’ experiences with the deliberative process in the course of collaborative governance. It is expected to be legitimacy-enhancing when participating citizens actively take part in the deliberation and when their views are taken into consideration during collaborative governance. We expect the deliberative effect to be

negative when citizens are only included on paper and/ or when decisions are made regardless of the process of collaborative governance.

The deliberative effect is based on the operation of an interpretive mechanism. This mechanism may rely on the definition of the target population, as previously discussed, but also on the process of decision-making itself (Soss 2002, Watson 2015) and, specifically, whether the relationships between public officials and citizens go both ways and the latter perceive to be heard and treated fairly. Feedback studies demonstrate that one-way relationships between public officials and citizens, where the latter have to face sanctions, discipline and have no possibility to provide inputs on their specific situation, generate negative evaluation of the nature of government and its responsiveness toward their needs; while two-ways relationships are conducive to the opposite outcome. Joe Soss' seminal comparative study of AFDC and disability schemes in the US lends support to the idea that universal and conditional programs trigger opposite outcomes (1999). AFDC is a scheme based on conditionality where beneficiaries are subjected to strong supervision, disciplinary measures and case workers scrutiny. His explanation points to beneficiaries' relations with case workers who are understood to be government's representatives. He emphasizes that recipients perceive their relations to state officials as being adversarial, inquisitive and partial. This generates a sense of powerlessness and triggers a poor evaluation of the state, along with a depressed personal and political efficacy. Similarly, in a comparative study of social programmes in England, Watson finds that caseworkers adopting a negative and intrusive approach have an adverse impact on beneficiaries' perceptions of the state and the bureaucracy (2015). On the contrary, two-way interactions between state officials and beneficiaries where procedures are non-invasive and respectful of one's specific situation are shown to send positive and politically enabling messages to these citizens as well as result in more

positive evaluations of the state (Mettler 2002, Bruch, Marx Ferree, and Soss 2010). These studies support our expectation that when collaborative governance is open and oriented toward consensus and based on thick deliberations with participants, including citizens, an enhanced deliberation-based legitimacy outcome is likely.

Last, we expect a third legitimacy-enhancing effect of collaborative governance based on participating citizens' involvement in such a decision-making process providing that they are deliberately and actively included and that they are satisfied with the collaborative process. This effect is an exposure effect. To the opposite, when participating citizens feel that their input are not considered and/or when they are dissatisfied with the process of collaboration, we expect the exposure effect to be negative. The feedback mechanism at stake here is the visibility mechanism.

The visibility of state action refers to citizens experiencing "some discernible outcome that leads them to inquire about the cause of this outcome" (Pierson 1993, 622). Policies in that respect are considered as sources of information that signal to citizens what the state and the bureaucrats do for them and others and how they treat them. Existing research has repeatedly reported how citizens draw from their experience with the most visible parts of government policies to make up their minds about the government in general, the state and bureaucracy (Soss 2002, Soss and Weaver 2017, Soss 1999, Lerman and Weaver 2004, Mettler 2011, 2018). To the contrary, where governmental policy is submerged, the state and the bureaucracy are granted less trust and less legitimacy (Mettler 2011, Rosenthal 2020). Mettler's analysis of the submerged state in the United States shows that many Americans just do not see the state, do not see what it is doing for them and consider that the scope of its intervention should be kept at a minimum to stay legitimate (2011). In addition, citizens' assessments of what they see of the state's and the bureaucracy's action is central in the beliefs in their legitimate

action. The specific valence of citizens' legitimacy assessments hinges on whether they consider that they benefit from the policy or, on the contrary, whether it generates a disproportionate burden for them (Rosenthal 2020). Studies show that some policies which are very visible and are an integral part of these citizens' experiences with the state result in negative assessments of the role of the state and its overall legitimacy (Soss 2002, Soss and Weaver 2017, Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011, Mettler and Soss 2004, Campbell 2012, Lerman, Sadin, and Trachtman 2017, Lerman and Weaver 2004). In sum, existing research lends credence to our expectation that through the very collaborative process, that is, regular and repeated interactions between the participants, and the active inclusion of participating citizens, the visibility of state action is heightened and has the potential to generate a positive assessment of the state's and the bureaucracy's legitimacy providing that citizens are satisfied with the decision reached in the course of collaborative governance. In that respect, while the exposure effect is elicited by the sheer visibility of state action, the positive or negative valence of the feedback effect has interpretive dimensions as it partly depends on citizens' perceptions of the fairness of the decision and their satisfaction with the decision outcomes.

Providing that specific institutional features of collaborative governance are present, there are therefore strong grounds to expect that participating citizens' experiences with them result in enhanced legitimacy outcomes through the operation of the interpretive and visibility mechanisms. Table 1 summarizes the targeting, the deliberation and the exposure effects and the institutional features they rest upon.

[INSERT Table 1 about here]

Table 1. The conditional legitimacy-enhancing effects of collaborative governance from the perspective of participating citizens

Possible legitimacy of outcomes of collaborative governance	Conditional upon specific institutional features of collaborative governance
Positive targeting effect	Collaborative governance conveys a positive definition of participating citizens, as partners deliberately included in the decision-making process
Positive deliberation effect	Collaborative governance values thick deliberative relations, as a two-way open communication between public officials and participating citizens
Positive exposure effect	Collaborative governance exposes participating citizens to state action and actively includes them in the related decision-making processes; and citizens assess positively the process of collaborative governance

Conclusion

Collaborative governance has gained prominence as a type of decision-making cross-nationally as well as across levels of government and policy sectors. It has raised high normative expectations regarding its democracy-enhancing outcomes. Yet, little is known about how collaborative governance may, in effect, result in such outcomes. In this article, we addressed this issue and focused on the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance from the perspective of participating citizens. We studied whether and how collaborative governance may heighten the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy from their own perspective, thereby adopting a positive, or subjective, approach to legitimacy.

We developed a theoretical account of how collaborative governance may reshape state-citizens interactions and how these bureaucratic encounters impact on participating citizens' assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy. In our two-step model, the first step studies citizens' experiences of collaborative governance. We show that when three critical institutional features are present, the psychological, learning and compliance costs of citizens-state encounters are likely to be alleviated. These institutional features are the deliberate and active inclusion of ordinary citizens as

participants of collaborative governance, an open process of collaboration where participating citizens are considered as partners by involved public officials and politicians and, last, thick communicative and deliberative relations between participants of collaborative governance.

The second step studies the cues that participating citizens derive from their experiences in the course of collaborative governance and their related assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy. We identified three legitimacy-enhancing effects when the institutional features exposed above are present: a targeting effect, based on how collaborative governance arrangements define participating citizens and include them in deliberative processes; a deliberation effect, based on the openness and quality of deliberative relations; and, an exposure effect, based on the active inclusion of citizens in the process of collaboration and citizens' assessment of this process. These effects result from the operation of interpretive and visibility mechanisms.

We drew from the administrative burden scholarship to show that when specific institutional features of collaborative governance are present, participating citizens' experiences with the government are expected to be redefined. In that respect, this article takes stock of the development of collaborative governance as a new type of state-citizens encounters and provides insights on how the administrative burden experienced by ordinary citizens are impacted. As anticipated by Heinrich (2016), an analytical focus on administrative burdens and related costs offers leverage to analyse the possibly positive effects of decision-making in mitigating administrative burdens. We also got traction from the policy feedback scholarship to show how the previously identified specific institutional features of collaborative governance matter to shape the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance.

Our analysis suggests that were the core institutional features of collaborative governance not to be present in fact, this type of decision-making cannot be expected to yield positive legitimacy outcomes. When arrangements labelled and publicized by public institutions as “collaborative governance” do not fulfil their promises – in terms of inclusion of ordinary citizens as partners, fair deliberation and consensus-orientation – they are likely to either generate no legitimacy-enhancing effect, and may even contribute to the delegitimation of public institutions and decision-makers.

This contribution has important implications for empirical research. The theoretical perspectives developed in the article invite further investigations of collaborative governance to not only focus on its processes and outputs. Focusing exclusively on the conditions under which collaborative arrangements unfold and the related decisions may indeed result in overlooking broader impacts of this innovative type of decision-making. In that respect, the administrative burden and policy feedback scholarships suggest to also pay attention to the broader outcomes of collaborative governance in terms of citizens’ assessments of the legitimacy of the bureaucracy and the state. Different avenues for empirical research are to be considered. In-depth case studies could explore our theoretical propositions and investigate how the institutional features of collaborative governance empirically affect the alleviation of administrative burden of programmes designed through collaborative processes, and the extent to which these institutional features are paired to specific legitimacy-enhancing effect. Moreover, comparative research designs could illuminate the variation between groups participating, or more generally exposed, to collaborative governance on the one hand, and groups who are not on the other hand. These studies would contribute to an empirically fine-grained analysis of how experiences of collaborative governance generate cues that feed back into

citizens' perceptions of the bureaucracy's and the state's legitimacy and whether they result in the legitimacy-enhancing effects we theorized in this article.

In pursuing such research avenues, studies of collaborative governance would advance knowledge on the broader democratic outcomes of this specific type of decision-making by focusing on specific audiences' own benchmarks, thereby shedding light on the crucial issue of the relations between citizens and governing regimes. Practically, our article also points at the critical importance of specific institutional features of collaborative governance to achieve its possible legitimacy-enhancing effects.

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