



## MANAGING AND MEASURING COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCE

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### Abstract

*Public sector research is focused on individual and (mono-)organizational performance. However, in the era of collaboration, collaborative performance becomes more important to achieve and to study (Agranoff 2005). This paper deals with managing (for) collaborative performance in multi-level arrangements. First of all, the paper explores the levels on which concepts of performance and collaborative management can be studied. Secondly, different collaborative strategies, actions and roles are discussed and illustrated using a single case. Thirdly, the challenge of assessing and measuring collaborative performance is dealt with.*

*Keywords: collaborative management, intergovernmental arrangement, collaborative performance, networks*

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## **1. Collaborative performance and collaborative management: two sides of the same coin**

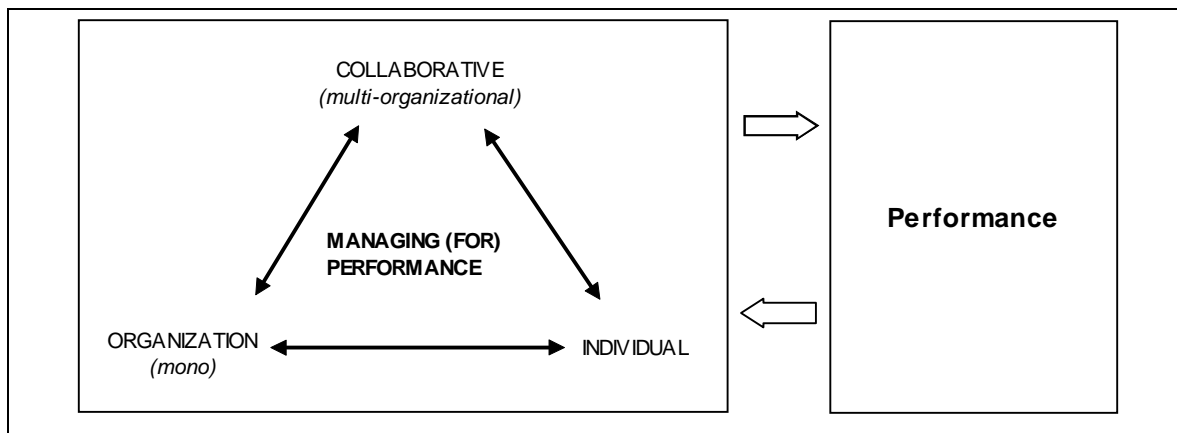
In this paper, we link collaborative performance and collaborative management. The research questions are how collaborative management takes shape, what collaborative roles can be discerned and how collaborative performance can be assessed. Three levels to analyze and assess managing collaborative performance are defined: the individual level (those who manage collaboratively), the organizational level (those organizations that are pursuing their organizational interests in a collaboration by managing collaboratively) and the collaborative level (the level of the collaboration itself and the management in function of this collaboration). Each level provides a different perspective on management and performance.

First of all, qualities, activities and strategies of managers (individual level) are an important analytical level, as managers are expected to manage for performance (Ingraham, Joyce and Donahue 2003; Boyne and Walker 2005). Recent work has already uncovered key features, for instance on what kind of activities managers in collaborative settings do and how they differ from mono-organizational management (Boyne 2004; Brewer and Selden 2000; Meier and O'Toole 2002). For instance, in a collaborative setting, *“the managerial challenge must also involve the development and maintenance of collaborative ties across diverse and differently situated organizational actors”* (Boyne, Meier, O'Toole and Walker 2005:635-636). Individual managers managing collaboratively can pursue the interests of the manager, the home organization, the interests of the collaboration (i.e. the collective), or a mix.

Secondly, in the recent collaborative literature, much work is focused on the collaborative performance of single organizations (mono-organizational level). Public organizations with insufficient capacity to achieve public goals by themselves call upon other organizations to help and solve the single organization's problems. The focus is then on how collaboration with other actors helps to achieve the interests of the home organization; the single organization is the default level. O'Toole, Meier and Nicholson-Crotty (2005) for instance studied how top managers (super intendants) in local schools manage collaboratively, in terms of managing upward, outward and downward.<sup>1</sup>

The third level is the collaborative network in itself. In our opinion, we lack knowledge about performance of a collaboration as a ‘collective’ and the way in which certain actors try to manage in function of that ‘collective’, in terms of a collective agenda rather than only pursuing separate organizational agendas within such a collaboration (Keast, Mandell & Brown 2006). This level is more in line with the way in which Agranoff and McGuire (2003a) defined collaborative management, namely as “a concept that describes the process of facilitating and operating in multiorganizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by single organizations” (4).<sup>2</sup> As such, the level of the ‘collaborative’ is a third level, different from the mono-organizational and individual level (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Three analytical levels for managing (for) performance**



This paper focuses on management in function of the collaborative level. Firstly, we look at collaborative management strategies of actors. Secondly, we define a number of roles based on these strategies. Thirdly, we reflect on the challenge to assess and measure collaborative performance.

## 2. Researching collaborative management

We want to improve our understanding of how actors use strategies and actions in collaborative arrangements to achieve collaborative performance. The Klijn and Teisman framework is introduced here and used in the fourth section to analyze agency of actors in the arrangement. We focus in particular on actors that try to make a collaborative arrangement ‘perform’ as a whole and what actions and strategies they use in this respect.

Klijn and Teisman (1997) defined a framework<sup>3</sup> to analyze strategies and actions of (network) actors at two levels. The first level is the game level, in which the ‘game management’ is aimed at influencing the interaction processes between actors in a context where those that are managing consider the arrangement as a constant. The second level is the arrangement or network level, in which management is aimed at changing or altering features of the arrangement itself. This ‘network constitution’ refers to all activities that are aimed at sustained changes in the network itself, as they redefine rules and change the distribution of resources, hence the ‘meta-governance’ of the network (Klijn 1996). Put differently, network constitution strategies try to influence the context in which games between actors are played.

Klijn and Teisman (1997) thus distinguish between steering in networks and steering of networks, so a more operational element (management) and a more institutional element (creating and shaping networks). They defined three points of intervention on which managerial efforts can focus, on both levels, namely cognition, actors and institutions. The six management strategies are listed in Table 1 and will be explained in the fourth section.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Management strategies in networks**

	Perceptions	Actors	Institutions
Game management to improve the game	(A) <i>Convenanting</i> : exploring similarities and differences in actors’ perceptions and the opportunities that exist for goal convergence	(C) <i>Selective (de)activation</i> : (de)mobilizing actors who possess resources (to block a game)	(E) <i>Arranging</i> : creating sustaining and changing ad hoc provisions which suit groups of interactions
Network constitution changes to improve the network	(B) <i>Reframing</i> : changing actors’ perceptions of the network (which games to play, which professional values matter, etc.)	(D) <i>Network (de)activation</i> : bringing in new actors or changing positions of existing actors	(F) <i>Constitutional reform</i> : changing rules and resources in networks or trying to fundamentally change the ecology of the games

(Klijn and Teisman 1997:106)

### 3. Research design

As collaborative practices make up a broad category, we now clarify in which type of cases collaborative management is analyzed. Our research is limited to multi-level

arrangements in the socio-economic and spatial-ecologic policy spheres, because it is expected that in these spheres, different governments and vested power and interests of actors – e.g. farmers lobbies, real estate developers, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, citizen groups, politicians, departments - come into play. Through in-depth case analysis, arrangements in these spheres then are tests to analyze how collaborative management takes shape in practice.<sup>6</sup>

The case reported in this paper functioned as a pilot study. The case was analyzed using multiple methods, in three consecutive rounds of analysis. The first round was a quick scan of the case, based on desk research and a number of exploratory interviews. The second round was an in-depth document analysis, based on primary and secondary sources like reports, white papers, working notes, meeting notes but also doctorates, articles, books and the like. The third round was a series of interviews, in particular semi-structured and open ended face-to-face interviews. In total, 27 actors (stakeholders and external experts) were interviewed in the period August 2003 - February 2004. These interviews were recorded and transcriptions were typed out. This approach should guarantee a multifaceted data collection. A number of follow-up interviews were carried out in the beginning of 2006.

#### **4. The Project Ghent Canal Area**

First, we introduce the case of the Project Ghent Canal Area and illustrate that it is a collaborative network, *“characterized by a tightly interconnected and dense set of relations as well as a high level of interdependence”* (Keast, Mandell and Brown 2006:5).<sup>7</sup> Secondly, we report strategies and actions of collaborative management using the Klijn and Teisman framework. Thirdly, we define a number of roles of actors in the process. Finally, we reflect on the challenge to assess and measure collaborative performance.

##### **4.1. Introducing: The Project Ghent Canal Area**

The Project Ghent Canal Area (PGCA) started in 1993 as a bottom-up program concerning spatial planning and the environment, and evolved into a permanent strategic planning process in the canal area in the urban region of Ghent, involving

public and private actors (see Table 2). The network deals with a complex set of problems that stemmed from the lack of coordination between policies and actions in the focus area; for instance, actors engaged in economic development were not considerate of the villages in the area, neither were departments of the Flemish government or the national railway company in their construction of roads, water- and railways. As a result, the canal area gradually evolved into a chaotic hotchpotch, mixing different functions (industry, housing, agriculture and the like) together without any proper tuning or balancing between these (conflicting) functions. The tension between economic development and the livability of the area mounted accordingly.

In 1993, a number of leading persons in the province of East-Flanders took the initiative to start a process to address these problems. This project aimed to develop and implement a coherent vision of the canal area along three lines: economic development, spatial development and environmental management, to safeguard livability and environmental quality as well as the economic future of the canal area (Van Wesenbeeck 2003).

A small group of officials and planners in the informal PGCA-arrangement first developed a strategic concept (=Target View) for the area during the period 1993-1996. The Target View was underpinned further by research and implementation projects that addressed the quality of life in the residential nucleus, environmental quality, mobility in the area, and the like. Throughout this period of time, new actors were brought in, adding interests and resources to the arrangement.

The vision on the future development of the canal area was forwarded by the PGCA-arrangement in 2003 in a draft Strategic Plan that also identified a number of key decisions and established an Action Program for sustainable development of the area. A number of interim results presented important building blocks, underpinning the long-term vision for the area and the collaborative arrangement as well; they ensured that the actors stayed involved and perceived win-opportunities (Albrechts and Van den Broeck 2003; Van den Broeck 2001).<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2: Members of the Sub regional Network of the Canal Area of Ghent<sup>10</sup>**

LEVEL	PUBLIC ACTORS
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City of Ghent + Ghent Port Company</li> <li>- Municipality of Evergem</li> <li>- Municipality of Zelzate</li> </ul>
Provincial (=East-Flanders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provincial Executive</li> <li>- Provincial departments (e.g. Division of Planning and Nature Preservation)</li> </ul>
Regional (=Flemish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governor of East-Flanders</li> <li>- Department of Economy – Division Economy &amp; Europe</li> <li>- Department of Employment – Central Directorate</li> <li>- Department of Agriculture and Horticulture – Central Directorate and provincial division Agri- and Horticulture Training East-Flanders</li> <li>- Department of Environmental Affairs, Nature and Land management – Central Directorate</li> <li>- Department of Spatial Planning, Housing, Monuments and Landscapes – Central Directorate, Provincial Division East-Flanders and Central Division of Spatial Planning</li> <li>- Department of Road Infrastructure and Traffic – Central Directorate and Provincial Division East-Flanders</li> <li>- Department of Water and Sea – Division Maritime Entrance and Division Flemish Naval Authority</li> <li>- Social mediator for the Flemish seaports</li> <li>- Flemish Public Transport Agency - Provincial Division East-Flanders</li> <li>- Flemish Land Agency – Provincial Division East-Flanders</li> <li>- Regional Development Agency East-Flanders</li> </ul>
National (=federal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Railway Company of Belgium: Holding – District North-West and Infrabel – Divisions Network, Technical Management and Ports</li> <li>- Committee for land purchase</li> </ul>
Cross-border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dutch municipality of Terneuzen</li> <li>- Euregion Scheldemond (Belgian provinces of East-Flanders and West-Flanders and Dutch province of Zeeland)</li> <li>- Benelux Economic Union (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg)</li> <li>- Dutch Directorate for Public Works and Water Management</li> </ul>
Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project Office Ghent Canal Area</li> </ul>
TYPE	PRIVATE ACTORS
Profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Companies (Volvo Cars Ghent, Sidmar and Honda Europe)</li> <li>- Consultants</li> </ul>
Not-for-profit/interest representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Citizen groups (six villages)</li> <li>- Environmental groups (two groups)</li> <li>- Trade unions (three: socialist, Christian and liberal)</li> <li>- Employers' organizations (two: chamber of commerce and association of companies in the canal area)</li> <li>- Farmers' organizations (two)</li> </ul>
Political parties (observers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flemish Christian-Democratic Party (CD&amp;V)</li> <li>- Flemish Liberal-Democratic Party (VLD)</li> <li>- Flemish Social-Democratic Party (SP.A)</li> <li>- Flemish Social-Liberal Party (Spirit)</li> <li>- Flemish Green Party (Groen!)</li> <li>- Flemish Ultra Right Party (Vlaams Belang)</li> </ul>

#### 4.2. Analyzing management strategies and actions

The PGCA is a laboratory to see to what extent management strategies defined in literature are used (and in what way) in practice. Instead of pointing to single actors' strategies that are focused only on their own organizational goals, we will look into

strategies that are aimed at the level of the collaborative arrangement, so in function of the performance of the arrangement itself. Most of these actions discussed here are carried out by actors of the informal process team (see 4.3.). These strategies and actions aim at performance in terms of process (e.g. keeping the collaborative arrangement functioning as a whole) and product (e.g. achieving tangible results or products like decisions and projects). The Klijn and Koppenjan framework, discussed in section two, is used for analysis.

### *(A) Convenanting*

*“Policy is the outcome of interaction between several actors with different perceptions. [...] The term ‘convenanting’ refers to a management strategy aimed at improving the consistency of the decisions made in the game by exploring and consolidating the perceptions of actors in the game” (Klijn and Teisman:106).* In fact, this management strategy is about using and playing the informal rules that exist in the collaboration.

One example of an (unsuccessful) attempt of ‘convenanting’ is a conflict during one of the meetings of the Steering Committee. *“...a year ago, Provag was founded as a public company with corporate rights, its own strengths and its own rules of the game. However, some actors still felt that they needed to go back to their municipal council for every decision to be made in Provag. We were unable to make clear to them that this is not the way to do it, because Provag was founded after that each council had officially approved it, and that decision included the right of Provag to function autonomous within its corporate rights. As long as the decision making in Provag is in accordance with the policy document which was agreed upon, there is no problem. However, they still didn’t get it.” (quote no 80).*<sup>11</sup>

Another example of ‘convenanting’ concerned a certain actor that kept arguing during a meeting, without strong arguments, about something that was already decided unanimously in an earlier meeting. *“After a while, the governor (= chair of the meeting) gave them a good talking-to, in public. I wouldn’t dare to return if that would happen to me” (quote no 81)* This quote points to two elements: first of all, the governor used the informal rules that a decision, once it is taken in consensus, cannot be contested again in the coming meetings by single actors. Secondly, these rules were not necessarily internalised or perceived as rules by every actor. It is not a coincidence that the people

that got reprimanded were newcomers in the process and had not experienced the process of the previous years nor the informal rules that were developed in those years. In contrast, the person that is quoted stated that he would never want to get such a reprimand, which indicates that he knew and accepted the rules of the game. The governor, in this case, used/referred to the informal rules to 'manage' the behaviour of that actor in function of a good operation of the arrangement.

In most games, the causality between a single 'convenanting' action and its impact is not straightforward. However, in more general terms, the assessment of most actors was that the way the governor used 'convenanting' in these consecutive sets of games, was indeed useful to keep the process en route and at times to come to decisions (or to prevent the reversal of decisions). In this sense, this management strategy contributed to the performance of the process as such.<sup>12</sup>

#### *(B) Reframing*

Reframing is about changing actors' perceptions of the network or arrangement, for instance which games to play or which professional values matter (Klijn and Teisman:106). Reframing often takes time, as perceptions are rooted in mental constructs and hence, are not easily changed. In PGCA, reframing was an explicit goal of the informal process team and the consultant played a key role in trying to reframe the mindsets of actors. The development of a joined long-term strategy for the canal area is an example, using consecutive documents to frame and write up this process. Final versions of these documents were always approved unanimously, to provide points of reference and as such also being useful in 'convenanting'.

This reframing was perceived as relatively successful: *"The people around the table have grown to understand one another, I am 100 percent sure of that. However, this does not mean that everyone always agrees with one another, but the understanding between different governments, different departments, and different interest groups has certainly improved. Now, a structured consultation between those actors became possible, while that was much more difficult before"* (quote no 82).

During interviews, numerous actors have reported that a better understanding between the actors was indeed developed, even to the level of the creation of a common 'Canal

Language'. Concepts part of that language were spatial concepts designed jointly in working groups and especially for the canal area, like the concept of 'coupling areas' (*koppelingsgebieden*) which presented a special and new kind of buffer zones between industrial zones and the remaining canal villages. However, the 'Canal Language' was designed, learned and spoken by the then representatives of actors in the Project. When such a representative was replaced for whatever reason by another or when a new actor joined in, the language learning process needed to start all over again for those representatives.

At times, this recurrent problem was very frustrating for both 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' and points to the variable defined by O'Toole (2003), namely the importance of stability for collaboration of the representation of actors. The old-timers did not always understand why or sometimes got fed up when newcomers started asking questions about concepts or challenged decisions which had been taken a long time ago, while newcomers did not always understand what these meant, which conventions existed between members, and the like. A quote, referring to the changing of the (political) representation of one of the local governments in the Project after local elections: *"the former mayor had not provided enough feedback to the local council. After elections, a new coalition came into office. But they had not experienced or had not gone through the same process as the former mayor, who participated in the Project in the beginning years. He was enthusiast, but that whole process in fact had not existed for the new coalition. In fact, the municipality was personified by one representative (the former mayor), and when he was gone, this problem arose. The only constant throughout the whole process was our municipal civil servant who participated in the working groups. Now and then, we asked him: 'what were the agreements on this or that dossier?' He does not understand why there was so little left of the process, because many of our questions concerned things that were evident or obvious to him. But many of the engagements that were made or taken during previous meetings were considered non-existing by the new representatives"* (quote no 28).

While the Project consciously focused on reframing perceptions, these efforts remained very vulnerable: throughout the process, some representatives of actors were replaced and new actors were brought in. In both cases, new representatives had not been part of the enduring (re-)framing process and needed to be 'educated' to the extent possible by

the other actors who had experienced the whole trajectory of the process. Reframing also has its limits: *“A part has not succeeded yet, namely the speeding up of procedures. We regularly find that some departments, some local governments, if it comes to the crunch, still have the reflex, when it comes to deciding on tangible things, they sometimes have the reflex to fall back into what I would call the ‘old evil’, in which they pull or yield back into their own trenches, and take positions or decisions from that position instead of keeping the collaborative spirit alive”* (quote no 83).

*(C) Selective (de-)activation*

According to Scharpf (1978), game management is mainly about selective activation of actors. This selective activation demands those managing collaboratively to assess which actors are essential at given moments in a policy process, whether or not to involve them (and how to involve them). Success of this tactic is not only dependent on a correct appraisal of the situation, but also on the willingness of actors to invest time and resources in a policy process, as they are considered autonomous.

An example of selective (de-)activation: in the Project, the head of the provincial division of the Flemish department of Road Infrastructure and Traffic was reluctant to participate. But once he started participating (why he changed his mind, see (D)), like other actors, he also used the Project to get his own agenda implemented. An important goal of his organization was to reconstruct the R4-beltway, which runs around the canal area. However, this reconstruction was a very costly program and the budget was not available in his organization at the moment he entered the Project. In his words, the following happened: *“The cabinet<sup>13</sup> of public works would not give me my intersection. However, at the end of the year, during an interim assessment of the budget, the Flemish government realized they had a surplus and the minister of public works got 74.3 million Euros of that surplus! But I knew about that before the others, and I called a cabinet member to ask him on what they were going to spent all that money. ‘All on cycling paths’, the guy said to me. I said ‘cycling paths? You’re mad, you will never be able to spent all that money in one year on cycling paths. And at the end of that year, when you still have a surplus, you’ll have to give back the money to the central budget. Will that make you happy? Think again, and remember, we need it hard in the Ghent Canal Area. If you take that Project seriously, you will have to give us extra money. This way, you can show that you believe and support the Project.’ Immediately after this call, I*

*went to the governor (chair of the PGCA) and I said: 'You should support that question at the cabinet level'. At the next meeting of the heads of division of our department, the budget situation was discussed. Instead of talking about 74.3 million Euros, the director-general only talked about 49.6 million Euros of surplus! So I remained silent. The day after, I got a telephone call (from the cabinet), saying: 'Yes, it is OK, can we start with the tender procedures?' I smiled and said: 'Which tender?'. And that is how it went. Without the Project, it would not have been so easy. Of course, I would have kept pressuring them (the cabinet), but the fact that we got that budget so easily, is in my opinion thanks to the Project. Also because actors from the Port of Ghent (which were of the same party political background as the competent minister) heavily lobbied for this dossier" (quote no 38).*

This story illustrates a number of elements. First of all, it clearly shows how an actor selectively activates other actors (e.g. the governor and the Port of Ghent) to support a lobby for resources that are outside the arrangement. While the man wanted to get the resources to serve his own organizational agenda, these were also useful for the collaborative agenda. The original plans for the R4-beltway and 'his' intersection were discussed within the collaborative arrangement, were redrafted to a certain extent to pay more attention to local traffic, to burdens of economic traffic, to cyclists, and were finally approved by all of the PGCA-members. This story also shows that activation is not limited to actors within the arrangement: while the man activated a number of other Project actors, they in turn activated other (in this case political) actors to influence the cabinet to take a certain decision. As such, one should in fact look for 'chains of activations' and 'chains of activated actors'.

#### *(D) Network (de)activation*

Network activation is about bringing in new actors or changing positions of existing actors. The next example is related to the selective activation discussed in the previous paragraph. The representative of the provincial division of the department for Road Infrastructure and Traffic was not very willing to participate at first. The reason why he did enter after some time, was at least twofold. Firstly, an event outside the Project played a role. During the process of drawing up a Spatial Structure Plan Flanders<sup>14</sup>, there was a turf battle between the infrastructure departments and the department of spatial planning. While the infrastructure departments felt that planning had to serve their

needs (i.e. building and maintaining road and water infrastructure), the spatial planning department was convinced that they were competent to decide how different territorial claims had to be reconciled and to define rules and procedures regarding the construction of infrastructure in different areas. In this sense, the infrastructure departments felt they lost 'autonomy' and the constructional engineers perceived they now had to listen to the spatial planners. After they 'lost' this turf war, this representative decided that in the future, his division always had to be present in arrangements in which decisions regarding spatial planning were to be made - as was clearly the case in the Project. The second reason was (political) pressure. As one of the actors said in an interview: *"X and Y at the cabinet of the minister (of public works) also played an important role in convincing that provincial division to join in the Project"* (quote no 36).

So on the one hand, an event outside the Project had an impact on the perceptions of an actor which was asked by the Project to join in.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, political pressure was used as well, which was in fact (indirect) 'hierarchical steering', as the minister of public works is the political boss of the infrastructure departments, including the provincial divisions. This story also demonstrates the relativity of the idea of 'autonomous' actors in an intergovernmental context (cfr. the shadow of hierarchy, Scharpf 1997).

Another example of network (de-)activation is the inclusion of a provincial division of the Flemish Department for Water- and Sea infrastructure. At a certain stage, as the focus area was dominated by a harbour, canal, docks and a number of locks, the Project initiators were convinced it would be useful to invite this actor to join in. However, although they convinced the actor to join, its representative did not believe in the project, nor that the latter could benefit his own organizational agenda. He participated physically, but not mentally: he only reasoned in terms of his own organization and was convinced that his organization still could achieve its goals alone. This is the issue of perception of interdependence: while other actors felt they were dependent on this provincial division, the latter did not see any opportunities in the Project. However, the other actors stated that that provincial division was also dependent on the Project: *"the provincial division of the department of Water and Sea should have been much more active in the Project than we were. If I said to him: 'common, man!', he only responded with a 'mmmhhh'. Of course, you need to be able to take some distance from your own*

*position, and should you be living in an ivory tower, get out of it. But he didn't. He was the personification of that provincial division and according to him, the others knew nothing about his field. That is partly explainable psychologically, not only because of the person, but also because unlike us (the department for Road Infrastructure and Traffic) who meet actors all the time in our work, they were so detached. Those guys don't know how to deliberate, and therefore they don't feel it is so evident. This is a certain state of mind, you know. Also, they still felt that they could afford themselves to act alone, despite of all the misery they have encountered just because they did not talk to people! But that is a spirit you couldn't get out"* (quote no 39).

Interestingly, after struggling with this actor for a long while, the informal project team managed to get a different provincial division from the same department into the Project, so in fact replaced this actor with another one: *"We muddled along with that representative for a long time, but then I solved the problem by asking for someone else in Brussels myself"* (quote no 40). So, because the initial 'activation' was unsatisfactory, the actor was deactivated and another was activated by the Project as a replacement. As Klijn and Teisman pointed out: *"selective (de-)activation [...] involves not only the question of which organization has to be activated, but [...] which actor within the organization has to be activated"* (110).

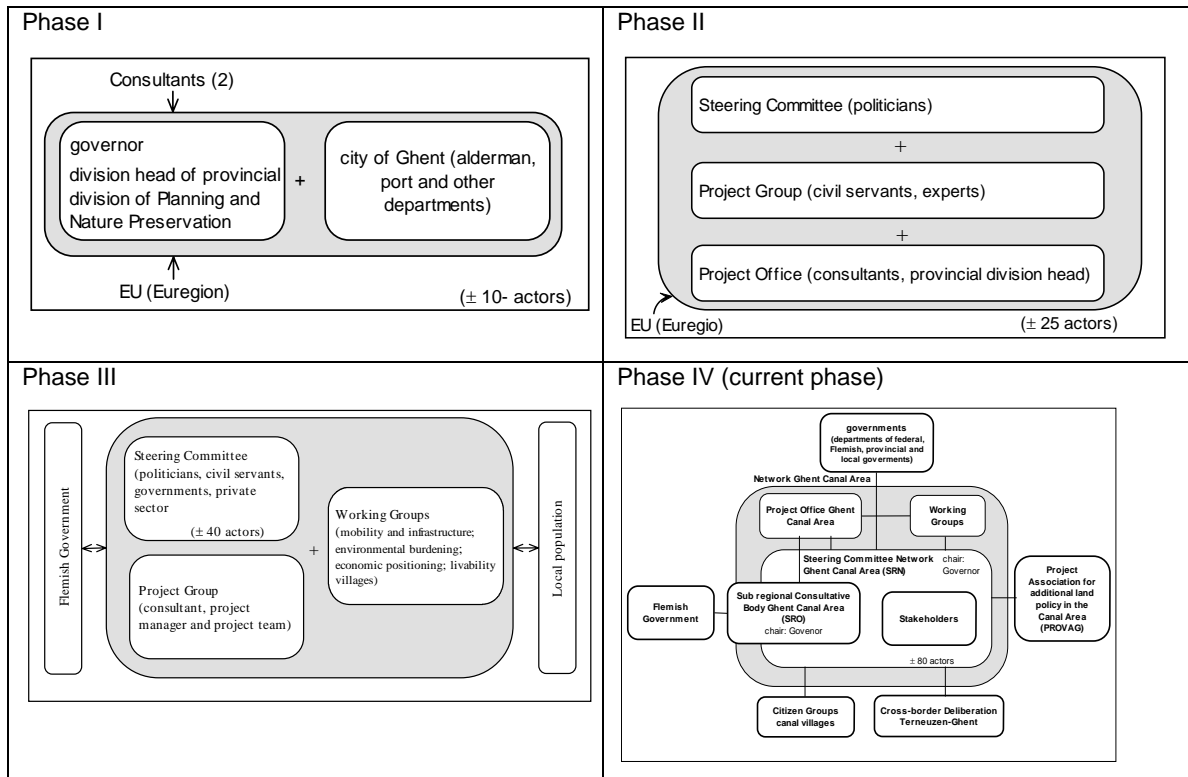
#### *(E) Arranging*

Arranging essentially refers to creating, sustaining and changing ad hoc provisions which suit groups of interactions (Klijn and Teisman). In the PGCA, numerous arranging efforts can distinguished. The next example deals with the evolution of the structure of the Project (see Figure 2).

In Phase I, the Project was arranged as a small informal group. In Phase II, it was restructured into a more formalized structure with a Steering Committee with political representatives, a Project Group with experts, civil servants and consultants, and a Project Office for the management. In Phase III, the structure was changed again: the Project Group was incorporated in the Steering Committee and a number of Working Groups were set up. During the current Phase (Phase IV), the Project was rearranged again. A new body called the Sub regional Advisory Body was set up, the citizen groups

became institutionalized, the Steering Committee was enlarged to represent a Sub regional Network which includes representatives of all stakeholders in the canal area.

**Figure 2: Arranging the arrangement**



(Project Ghent Canal Area 2006; Van den Broeck 2001; Voets and De Rynck 2004)

Without going into too much detail about the multitude of arranging efforts, it is clear that this was a constant concern in the Project and led to substantial reorganization throughout the process. This arranging is closely related to the ‘constitutional reform’ strategy discussed in (F), since it also changed rules and resources in the network. While the Steering Committee in its early years was the arena in which the actors debated and clashed openly, without any restraints, the continued expansion of that Committee and evolution into an open network has caused it to become a formal platform mainly for information purposes.<sup>16</sup> From a dozen actors in the early years, there are now over seventy different actors<sup>17</sup> present. This evolution has clearly changed the make-up of the arrangement. Although these arranging efforts regarding the structure and instruments of the PGCA were not always planned far ahead, they all were consciously designed.

*(F) Constitutional reform*

Another strategy is aimed at changing the arrangement itself. These changes, in turn, are expected to have an impact on the games played within the arrangements. An example of this strategy is the way the Project influenced the making of a Decree<sup>18</sup> for the Flemish seaports. At that time, the Project actors felt that they did not have enough impact on Flemish decision-making, while the Flemish level had the most competences and resources in relation to the canal area. The drawing-up of that Decree was considered by the Project as an opportunity to strengthen their influence at the Flemish level in a structural way. The Project actors lobbied to get an article in the Decree that enabled each seaport<sup>19</sup> to set up a Sub regional Advisory Body to advise the Flemish government on environmental, spatial and mobility issues regarding the port areas.

They managed to get the article in the Decree and consequently were the first to set up an SAB for the Ghent canal area. However, while this effort was clearly directed to changing the resources of the network, so far, the SAB has had little impact in getting their canal area-related dossiers through the Flemish policy making processes more easily or with more success. In fact, recently, the SAB had an opposite effect; instead of speeding up the canal dossiers and creating more political influence on the Flemish level, it slowed down the process. While an advice of the SAB was needed by the Project, the SAB was not able to give that advice because the Flemish government, after the Flemish elections in 2005, had not yet formally recomposed and reappointed the SAB members.

Another example of constitutional reform is the process of the spatial delineation of the seaport area by the Flemish government. This spatial delineation is part of the SSPF and is a legally binding 'hard' definition of the exact seaport area. Within this area, different rules apply than in the areas outside. For instance, the parts within the delineated area are eligible for financial support by the Flemish government for economic purposes and are subject to the competence of the Ghent Port Company, while other parts outside the delineated area are not. Hence, this process defined a number of rules of the game for the arrangement to take into account. Interestingly, the delineation process itself was carried out by the Project, so they were able to give their input to the final proposal for delineation on which the Flemish government then decided.

### **4.3. Managing (for) collaborative performance: defining roles**

After analyzing collaborative actions, we would now like to identify the main collaborative managers. If we look at the management of arrangements, roughly two categories can be distinguished. On the one hand, actors use management strategies in function of their own organizational agenda's. On the other hand, a number of actors are mainly concerned with the management of the collective process as a whole: keeping actors in and motivated, looking for new resources useful for the arrangement, and the like. Our interest here is in the second group.

Looking back at PGCA, there is no single arrangement/process/network manager at work. There is a Project Office with a Project Coordinator for the PGCA, but in fact, an informal process team can be distinguished. This informal process or project team consists of four actors: (1) the director of the provincial department of Planning and Nature Conservation, (2), the Project Coordinator, (3) the provincial governor and (4) a consultant.<sup>20</sup> These four actors play distinct roles.

'network operator'. A 'network operator' is an actor, e.g. a project manager, that is responsible for the daily management of the arrangement: preparing documents for meetings, following up on the operations of different working groups, managing the website and databases, so i.e. a secretariat which takes care of all the administrative aspects of the arrangement. In the PGCA, as can be expected, this is the work of the project coordinator, who takes care of the day-to-day management. However, the Project Coordinators' function is not limited to administrative functions only; she is for instance also the first contact for and communicator between actors in- and outside the arrangement.

'network champion'. Similar to Agranoff's (2003c) notion, a 'network champion' is understood here as an actor that excels in networking in terms of building, maintaining and using connections with other actors at all levels and of all backgrounds, stakeholders and other relevant actors. In the case of PGCA, the provincial director can be considered to be the 'network champion', as he is very active in networking on personal, professional and party political levels. This was acknowledged by all the actors that were interviewed: they all considered him the spider in the arrangements' web. While he was a network champion with a heart for the collective arrangement, other

network champions existed as well. For instance, the head of the provincial division of the department of Road Infrastructure and Traffic was also widely connected, both politically as professionally. However, in contrast with the provincial administrator, his network was not build on or aimed at the joint agenda in the canal area – although in some cases, he did put it to good use (see the case of the R4-beltway).

'network promoter': somewhat diverging from Agranoff's (2003c) definition, here, a 'network promoter' is an actor that is considered authoritative, accepted by all actors as a principal (in moral terms, not in terms of power or hierarchy) which leads the participating actors towards the common goals. He/she holds a position of trust and is also the one to which actors direct grievances or concerns. He/she tries to keep things together at a general level and is the one that in cases of conflict is expected to appease conflicts. If necessary, this actor might even 'sanction' actors (but again, based on a moral authority, based on trust and informal acceptance, granted to him by the stakeholders, rather than based on a hierarchic position). In PGCA, the former governor was the 'network promoter'. He was the active chair of the PGCA, accepted by all actors as authoritative, perceived neutral, capable of keeping the process on route. The governor was also a go-between for local, provincial and Flemish government.

'creative thinker': A 'creative thinker' is an actor that has no stake in the focus area or regarding the issues at the table, and hence is 'free' to give creative input. These actors deliver expertise, develop concepts, models, plans, visualize ideas and produce tools to build 'groupware', to induce consensus, and the like. In the PGCA-case, the main consultant is the 'creative thinker'. This consultant actively sought to frame and reframe actors' mindsets, to forward innovative and joint concepts to incorporate different interests. Although the consultant did not have an explicit 'process coaching'-role in the beginning, they also looked at process related aspects in terms of quick wins and identifying strengths and weaknesses of actors.

Apart from four 'collaborative' roles, which are joined in the PGCA in the informal process team, this group includes actors playing a fifth role, namely that of 'vision keeper' (for an overview, see Figure 3).



arrangement. The former project coordinator who is now head of planning at the city of Ghent is an example of a 'vision keeper', the vice-president of the Ghent Port Company is another one. However, this does not imply that other actors are not following-up on the vision: the governor can be considered a vision keeper as well (so different roles can be combined in one person or actor).

In the second group, at least two roles can be defined, namely that of 'network participant' and 'network environment'.

'network participant': A 'network participant' is every actor that is officially/in formal terms part of the network structure; it is a general and formal category. These actors manage from time to time, and their management actions are mainly aimed at their own organizational interest.

'network environment': This realm includes all actors that are not involved in the network officially but who might be relevant or have an impact (directly or indirectly) of the network. The network environment is of course not limited to actors; institutions, rules, and the like are also part of the environment.

To sum up: the informal process team is a relatively small 'elite' (in neutral terms) consisting of actors who play distinct collaborative roles. The collaborative elite chiefly managed for performance of the collaborative arrangement as a whole. How they do this, was discussed in the 4.2. Each role – if played successfully – can help to achieve collaborative performance. One of the critical factors then is to achieve the right mix of roles and assigning the right individuals to the right roles (or vice versa).

#### **4.4. Measuring and assessing collaborative performance?**

How does one measure and assess collaborative performance? Based on his study of local economic development networks in the US, Agranoff (2005; 2006) argued that collaborative performance<sup>22</sup> can be assessed and measured in terms of the value-adding dimension of collaboration: what is the added value of the collaboration? Agranoff defined four types of performance indicators in terms of added value. The first indicator relates to the individual level, the second indicator relates to the organizational

level, the third and fourth indicator are closest to what we defined as the collaborative level in the first section.

The first indicator relates to the personal and professional values added for network participants by (participating in) a collaborative arrangement. This indicator is about the 'individual' gains for participating individuals like a civil servant or a politician. The second indicator is concerned with the values added to the home organization/agency network: what does a department or citizen group get out of the collaboration (which it would not get otherwise)? In the PGCA-case, both performance indicators seem to be present, but not in an explicit or straightforward way. Most actors reported during interviews that they got something out of the project. Some interviewees pointed to added value on the individual level (e.g. enlarging their networking capacity), on the organizational level (e.g. having access to information which their organization did not have before) or both. During interviews, most actors reported that the Project helped to achieve increased integration, resource acquisition, information sharing, political alignment, designing governance structures, enhanced legitimacy and a better understanding between actors. The story of added value on both levels is highly dependent on the perception of each actor: for instance, some actors perceived that other actors got result A and B out of the Project so far, while the latter themselves not necessarily shared this view or pointed to different results C and D.

Do we need common measures for collaborative performance if participating individuals and organizations perceive they get something out of a collaboration? Agranoff (2005), Keast, Mandell and Brown (2006) and Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) argued that collaborative networks do need common or joined performance measures and indicators. The latter then should be focused on ex post satisfying, on tangible results and on process criteria. The third and fourth indicator defined by Agranoff (2005) are related to the value added by the network or collaborative arrangement itself, in terms of processes (i.e. the way in which more tangible results are produced, like the way in which decision making or the interaction between participants is organized) and in terms of tangible outcomes or "*productive collaborative products*" (Agranoff 2005:39).

But how do we make them more operational? How are explicit common measures to be defined in terms of process and tangible results? Are all aspects of collaborative

performance measurable? Framing and reframing, changing discourse and organizational cultures, building trust and the like are less tangible and more difficult to detect and to measure than products like a tangible decision to fund a project or a successful afforestation or housing project. Do we need a different conceptualization of performance, if precisely these less tangible and measurable dimensions are at the heart of collaborative networks?

PGCA did not have explicit common measures. Hence, its collaborative performance seems a rather 'informal' issue, difficult to grasp and indeed 'ex post satisfying': apart from the ex ante formulation of a very general goal of coordinating and tuning policies in the canal area, most actors nor the collective arrangement itself used ex ante defined measures to assess or monitor whether or not the Project indeed performed collaboratively. More recently, certainly at a more operational level, common measures are being defined more explicitly, for instance vis-à-vis the implementation of the action program. The apparent lack of explicit common measures does not mean that there was no conscious dealing with the issue of performance at the collaborative level: the informal process team for instance used guiding principles, in terms of developing a strategic, coherent and shared vision, tackling day-to-day problems and achieving short term actions to achieve 'quick wins', and achieving a participative process with all stakeholders. Additional research is required to assess the collaborative performance in cases like the PGCA more systematically.

## **5. Conclusions**

This paper set out to provide some of the basic building blocks to construct a more encompassing framework to study the collaborative dimension in public policymaking, arguing that collaborative performance and collaborative management are two sides of the same coin. In the previous sections, collaborative management in terms of managing (for) collaborative performance was successfully analyzed using a network management framework by Klijn and Teisman (1997). Using a single case study, a rich – albeit incomplete - image was painted of collaborative efforts, in particular of roles, strategies and actions aimed at creating 'public value' at the level of the collaborative (Agranoff 2005).

Making collaborative performance more operational however proved to be difficult: how to define performance measures and indicators to assess the former? Scholars argued in favor of joined measures that focus on post satisfying, process and tangible products. However, in the PGCA-case - consciously or unconsciously - collaborative performance measures were not defined or implicit at most and primarily relating to added value on the individual level and the organizational level.

Is it possible to develop a joined set of common measures to evaluate collaborative performance? Do we need such a set? Can we successfully develop the collaborative level as a distinct level to analyze and study management and performance in the future?

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Managing upward (MU) refers to 'politics', as public managers have to deal with overhead political leaders. Public officials have to think about the political sustainability of a goal and hence, consider the *"politics surrounding the organization"* (Moore 1995:73). Managing outward (MO) is about explicit interactions with actors outside one's own organization to achieve its goals. Finally, managing downward (MD) is about the capacity to implement goals/strategies in one's own organization, which is considered the most conventional but still a core component of public management (Moore 1995; O'Toole, Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Agranoff and McGuire (2003b) also consider collaborative management as a theory that integrates paradigms of intergovernmental and network management (1402).

<sup>3</sup> This framework is one of several, as other scholars defined 'categories' of strategies and actions as well (see for instance the work of Agranoff, McGuire, Meier, O'Toole, Huxham, Vangen).

<sup>4</sup> These activities are similar to collaborative activities defined by other scholars (see for instance Agranoff and McGuire (2003a), Meier and O'Toole (2003), Huxham and Vangen (2005). Agranoff and McGuire for instance also define managerial activities in multi-organizational settings like activation, framing, mobilizing and synthesizing.

<sup>6</sup> Since collaborative arrangements and their management are relatively understudied, this research opted for an inductive and qualitative approach. To understand complex phenomena like multi-level arrangements and the management of the latter, the case study method is the most appropriate and applied method (Yin 2003). However, a number of scholars (e.g. O'Toole and Meier) also use quantitative and survey research to probe collaborative management.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the (density of) network relations, they distinguish between three types of networks: cooperative (*"short term, often informal and largely voluntary relations between organization entities"* (4)), coordinative (*"involve not only information sharing that is more detailed about projects and which results in joint planning, decision-making and action between organizations as well"* (4)) and collaborative networks (*"tightly interconnected and dense set of relations as well as a high level of interdependence"* (5)).

<sup>8</sup> Some of the results achieved by the PGCA: a series of changes to the land use plans in the canal area, with each change to be decided upon by the Flemish government and demanding time-consuming legal procedures. These changes included designating hundreds of acres of land from industrial uses to nature reserves, an expansion for a multinational that planned an investment of approx. 429 million Euro but also the delineation of a number of buffer zones, the exact territories of villages that were to be protected and the exact delineation of industrial and harbour zones. Other key results include the successful establishment of a public company named Provag to be able to relocate houses, farms and businesses which could not be purchased compulsorily, the decision of the Flemish government to mandate the Flemish Land Agency to arrange the buffer zones, and the signing of an agreement between the Flemish government and Provag in which the former agreed to advance the necessary funds for the latter to start its operations. Other results

include a significant reduction of noise, dust and air pollution in the area and the approval and funding for a large road-building project (worth approx. 25 million Euro).

<sup>10</sup> Composition dated March, 2006

<sup>11</sup> Quotes in this paper are translated from Dutch to English and their number corresponds with the numeration of the quotes in the original case report (in Dutch, see Voets and De Rynck 2004). The quotes were numbered to make identification of interviewees by members of the public more difficult.

<sup>12</sup> More detailed analyses of different games and 'convenanting' strategies by other actors however would be useful to understand the dynamics of this management strategy more clearly.

<sup>13</sup> In Belgium, federal and regional ministers have personal staff called "cabinets" at their disposal. These cabinets are composed of sometimes large personal staffs (up to 50 people or more), consisting of both political staff members as well as policy experts regarding the ministers' competences. Often, staff members are members of the same political party as the minister. Frequently, civil servants are attached to a cabinet for a period of office.

<sup>14</sup> The 'Spatial Structure Plan Flanders is an integral legal framework for spatial planning in Flanders and was created in 1997. The SSPF was conceived as a framework to bring together all territorial claims of both central (Flemish), subregional and local actors. It tried to combine "a bottom-up approach, rooted in local conditions and potentialities (interpreted in their broadest sense) [and] a complementary top-down policy aimed at inducing fundamental and structural changes [...] linking local conditions with structural macro-tendencies" (Albrechts 1999:592).

<sup>15</sup> This event also caused friction within the Project: one of the civil servants which was closely involved as a planner in drawing up the SSPF was also present in the Project. Hence, the representative of that provincial division 'met' his enemy again in the Project. Nevertheless, these actors were reconciled as the man got aware of the benefits of the Project (see the story of the R4-beltway).

<sup>16</sup> Some actors indicated in interviews that a potential threat now is the potential shift from real decision making from the Steering Committee to the Sub regional Advisory Body, as the former becomes too encompassing and the latter is a relatively small group including representatives of the competent Flemish ministers.

<sup>17</sup> By 'actors' we refer to distinct organizational entities. These entities can be part of a 'larger' entity, e.g. several planning divisions, part of the Flemish department of spatial planning, which in turn is part of the Flemish government.

<sup>18</sup> Note: In the Belgian constitutional design, the federal level produces laws while the regions, such as Flanders, produce 'decrees'. These decrees are, in legal terms, equivalent to federal laws.

<sup>19</sup> There are four seaports in Flanders.

<sup>20</sup> This case was analyzed during September 2003 - August 2004. However, we are still monitoring the evolution of the case. In the fall of 2004, the then Project Coordinator and the then provincial governor, two mainstays of the Project, needed to be replaced. The former project coordinator became head of the planning department of the city of Ghent (so moving from the arrangement itself to one of the main stakeholders) and his successor only started to work in the summer of 2005. At roughly the same time, the then provincial governor retired in pension. The new governor, who started to work in December 2004, has taken up his predecessor's role to chair the PGCA Steering Committee and the Sub regional Advisory Body. However, it is too early to assess to what extent he will function differently vis-à-vis the PGCA. Hence, if the governor is mentioned in this paper, we refer to the former and not to the current one.

<sup>22</sup> Agranoff (2005) considers managing for collaborative performance as being focused at "those management activities that increase public value" (19).

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