

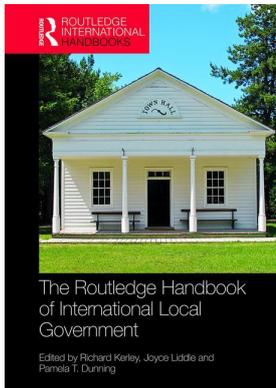
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6

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION

From dichotomy to local governance arenas

*Alessandro Sancino, Marco Meneguzzo, Alessandro
Braga and Paolo Esposito*

Introduction

The relationship between politics and administration is a long-standing theme and has been one of the most widely debated issues since the early days of public administration studies (Goodnow 1900; Waldo 1948; Weber 1922; Wilson 1887).

Scholars have developed several models to describe the relationships between elected and tenured officials in public institutions. However, recently the conditions under which politicians and public managers operate have changed a great deal. For example, the shift from government to governance is changing the role of the state in societal regulation. In this context, an array of other actors both at an individual and/or at an organisational level is entering in the democratic governance of public institutions, playing a key role in shaping decision-making processes and in co-creating and co-producing (but potentially also co-destroying) outcomes of public interest (e.g. Bryson et al. 2017; Nabatchi et al. 2017; Sancino 2016).

Thus, politics and administration are currently increasingly situated in settings characterised by both vertical and horizontal multilevel governance arrangements and by various relationships with different actors (Budd and Sancino 2016). Some authors have emphasised the polycentric nature of modern governance processes, pointing out that they are not neutral on the relationships between politics and administration, because (for example) they impact on the role of politicians (Sørensen 2006) and on democratic performance (Mathur and Skelcher 2007).

Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to systematise the main studies on the relationship between politics and administration in local governments and discuss several perspectives for the future research agenda on this topic.

This chapter is organised as follows: the second section pinpoints the dichotomy view of politics and administration; the third section presents the findings of several studies shedding light on the overlapping roles of politicians and public managers across the public policy cycle; the fourth section contextualises our discussion to local governments in the current 'new public governance era'; the fifth section defines the concept of local governance arenas; the sixth section explains what is stakeholder management in local governance arenas; the seventh section provides several case illustrations from Italy; the last section offers some concluding remarks.

The relationship between politics and administration: the dichotomy

Traditionally, relationships between politicians and public managers have been seen as characterised by the concept of strict separation and dichotomy. Weber (1922) has identified six central elements of bureaucracy: (i) clearly defined division of labour and authority, (ii) hierarchical structure of offices, (iii) written guidelines for organising administrative processes, (iv) recruitment procedures based on specialisation and expertise, (v) office holding as a career and/or vocation, and (vi) duties and authority attached to positions, not persons. Embedded in this model is between clear division of roles between politicians and public managers (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). The former act as sovereign representatives of political values and interests; define goals and develop strategies, while the latter should implement plans and programs autonomously and neutrally in order to guarantee an efficient running of the government.

The distinction between politics and administration was also conceptualised by Wilson (1887). According to Wilson (1887: 210), the role of politics is ‘setting the task for administration’ that is a technical instrument devoted to policy execution. This model of division of authority was grounded in the idea – very important at that time – that limiting the interference between politics and administration was beneficial because it would guarantee more accountability and less corruption. This proposition is often referred to as the ‘dichotomy model’ and it is based on a conception of insulation of public managers from all those activities that are not purely administrative (e.g.: ‘formulating mission and policy decisions’) and of politicians from activities that are not related to the political mandate and to the process of policy making (e.g. ‘administration’ and ‘management’). In this respect, Overeem (2005) argued about the urgency to rediscover the importance of this model, as the only one that might be able to clearly reaffirm the value of the neutrality of public managers from political interference.

The dichotomy model has influenced not only bureaucratic systems of public administration. Indeed, it has been re-interpreted with some adjustments also by new public management (NPM) reforms. NPM advocates strive to introduce economic rationality into public organisations (Hood 1995) and transform ‘classical bureaucrats’ (Putnam 1973) into managers with greater autonomy from politics (Rouban 2003). According to this conception of NPM, civil servants in their role of managers are expected to be responsible for the definition and the attainment of goals, as well as for the good management of financial and human resources (e.g. Pierre 2001; Pierre and Peters 2005). In the NPM model, the normative division of roles between politicians and public managers still continues to exist, but it is reinterpreted: the primacy of management replaces the more traditional primacy of politics.

However, the main problem that neither bureaucracy, new public management nor new public governance models can solve is the ‘pathological degeneration’ of public administration that may occur when authoritarian and/or politicised governments pursue particular instead of general interests (Borgonovi and Esposito 2017; Peters and Pierre 2004).

The relationship between politics and administration: from dichotomy to complementarity

Many contributions in the literature have criticised the dichotomy model pointing out that it does not well depict the more nuanced and complex relationships between politicians and public managers (e.g. Svava 1998, 1999a). Thus, several authors have tried to provide new conceptualisations.

Aberbach et al. (1981) have empirically investigated the relationships between politicians and public managers acting in central governments in seven countries (Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and the US). The authors proposed four images for representing the relationships between politicians and public managers. Image I (policy/administration) depicts politicians and public managers as separated according to the traditional dichotomy model. Image II (Interests/facts) represents a situation in which both politicians and public managers participate to policy making, but interpreting different rationalities: interests by politicians and facts by public managers. Image III (energy/equilibrium) sees politicians and public managers as respectively energisers and equilibrators in the policy making process. Finally, image IV (pure hybrid) mirrors a situation in which politicians and public managers play overlapping roles in policy making and public management. These authors observed from their empirical findings an increasing prevalence of the Image number four.

Peters (1987) has developed five models of relationships between politicians and public managers along a continuum ranging from the 'formal model', characterised by the subordination of public managers to politicians, to the 'administrative state', where the pivotal role is played by public managers that lead the policy making process because of their strong expertise. The intermediate models are the 'village of life', 'functional village life' and 'adversarial politics'. In the 'village of life', politicians and public managers show strong cohesion, common objectives and shared logics of action and have also a reciprocal convenience in acting for promoting a 'good governance of public institutions', since this may generate positive effects on their careers. The 'functional village of life' model presents similarity with the previous one: politicians and public managers of a specific policy sector build an alliance to get the best allocation of funds and resources against the politicians and public managers of other policy sectors. The 'adversarial model' is opposed to the 'village of life' model since politicians and public managers are in competition for gaining primacy over the policy process.

Svara has developed other typologies of the relationships between politicians and public managers. In his early studies the author adopted a dichotomy-duality model. The governmental process is split in four functions: mission, policy, administration and management. Mission refers to the main underlying philosophy of the organisation, the values that guide its action, the strategic positioning and the portfolio of functions and public services delivered. The mission can be explicit or derived indirectly from the effects of decisions that are not spelled out. Policy concerns all the decision related to the budget and public services. Administration refers to the management of administrative processes that are implemented to achieve the objectives of public policies, as well as the definition of the procedures and administrative regulations. Finally, the function of management is described in residual form and it comprises all the activities undertaken to support the functions of policy and administration, including in particular those related to the management of human resources. Data collected by surveys involving managers and elected officials from local governments (e.g. Svara 1985, 1999b) showed that elected officials and administrators seem to have a dichotomous-like relationship in activities related to mission and management, whereas in policy and administration related activities they seem to play overlapping roles pointing to a duality.

In 2001, Svara developed a new typology that was based on the interplay between two factors; the level of control exerted by elected officials and the level of independence of administrators. Four combinations emerged: (i) political dominance in case of high political control and low administrative independence; (ii) bureaucratic autonomy in case of low political control and high administrative independence; (iii) 'laissez faire', when both control and independence are low; and (iv) complementarity, when both control and independence are high. In this last combination elected officials and administrators play distinctive roles but their functions overlap.

The combination 'laissez faire' includes the dichotomy model, because 'the distance between the two sets of officials does not contribute to real control or real independence, but to coexistence' (Svara 2001: 180).

Combining the degree of distance and differentiation between elected officials and administrators and the level of control of administrators by elected officials – Svara (2006) distinguished four models:

- 1 Separate roles with subordination of administrators to politicians and separate roles and norms.
- 2 Autonomous administrator when administrators are involved in the policy role, whereas politicians are separated from the administrative role.
- 3 Responsive administrator when administrators are subordinates to politicians and political norms dominate over administrative norms.
- 4 Overlapping roles when reciprocal influence exists between elected officials and administrators and they share roles.

A reference to the empirical reality of the Italian Public Administration system is useful for a better understanding of the models identified by the literature. Italy – and other states as well – has institutionalised the existence of different types of managerial roles which fall within the four main profiles: separate roles is the logic behind general secretaries working in many Italian public agencies across all the levels of government; autonomous administrator resembles the logic of city managers in Italian municipalities with over 100,000 inhabitants and of general directors appointed in Italian Ministries and/or Regions on a fixed term basis for the length of the political term (on Italian city managers, see for example Sancino and Turrini 2009); responsive administrators are managerial staff appointed by Italian politicians to work directly with and for them; overlapping roles is a model clearly illustrated in Italy by the example of many ex-politicians who are then appointed as managers of public corporations, especially at the local and regional level and vice versa by some public managers that who transfer to a political career like in the case of the current Mayor of Milan.

The relationship between politics and administration in the local governance era

In 2006 Svara identified a new frontier for research on political-administrative relations: 'the study of how each set of officials interact with citizens and groups in the community' (Svara 2006: 1086). With other words, but with the same intuition, Skelcher (2007: 61) pointed out how 'the next big step in public management research is to move beyond the question of whether management matters to answer the question: does democracy matter?'

After the development of the bureaucratic and NPM model of public administration, the rise of the new (public) governance model (e.g. Bingham et al. 2005; Rhodes 2000) has drawn attention to the role that citizens and non-government organisations play in pursuing outcomes of public interest. Thus, if the public administration literature rooted in the thought of Wilson (1887) and Weber (1922) was based on the concept of separation between politics and administration and was framed in a context of high politicisation and subordination of public managers to the political will, the present context requires to understand politics and administration through the roles played by new actors and the new domains where politicians and public managers are now operating (Nalbandian and Nalbandian 2003; Nalbandian et al. 2013).

Local governance refers to a practice (or way of governing) implemented by a local government and characterised by the steering and involvement – both formally and informally – of a range of other relevant actors acting within the community (community governance) and beyond the level of the community (multi-level governance) through different forms (e.g. networks and partnerships) and different styles (e.g. coordination and collaboration), with the aim of working with them for the achievement of relevant public and social outcomes (e.g. Rhodes 1996; Benington 2000; Stoker 2003, 2011).

Local governance ‘changes how traditional institutions work because they operate in a more protean environment’ (John 2001: 17) and it is characterised by the growing attention on network schemes and rules for governing the relationships with stakeholders and by an interactive and collaborative nature, rather than by a hierarchical or contractual nature (Edelenbos 1999, 2005; Denters and Rose 2005; Edelenbos et al. 2010; Torfing et al. 2012). In other words, local governance is enacted in interactive arenas with a variety of stakeholders playing different roles. Several authors have investigated the role played by politicians and/or public managers and their relationships with other actors in governance contexts (e.g. Feldman and Khademanian 2007; Hansen 2001; Nalbandian 1999). Sørensen (2006) has extensively written about the implications of governance processes on the roles of politicians, arguing how the role of politicians should evolve towards a meta-governance role. This shift does not necessarily undermine representative democracy as such: in fact, meta-governance opens the door for the development of a new strong model of representative democracy (Sørensen 2006: 99).

If political officials control government processes in the traditional perspective of representative democracy (Edelenbos et al. 2010), something changes in the interactive governance practices (e.g. Sørensen 2002; Sørensen and Torfing 2003, 2005; Torfing et al. 2012) where public managers and political officials have to manage the growing involvement of external stakeholders into the work of government. In this respect, Mathur and Skelcher (2007: 235) argued how (network) governance is reshaping the role of public managers, positioning them as ‘responsively competent players in a polycentric system of governance rather than neutrally competent servants of a political executive’.

Local governance arenas

Following Van Damme and Brans (2012: 1047), we define local governance arenas as ‘local government organised arrangements of interaction on decision making and/or service delivery with societal parties such as citizens and non-government organizations’. Hirst (2000) and Fung and Wright (2001) clarified how interactive governance arenas bring together governments at different levels in the political system and can promote democracy by improving the exchange of information between them. However, as interactive governance and governance arenas often follow informal rules, they are difficult to hold to account (Katz and Mair 1995; Pierre and Peters 2005).

There are different types of local governance arenas. Local government may engage external stakeholders in doing different things (Svara and Denhardt 2010). Drawing from the work of Alford (2013), we can identify five different functions for engaging external stakeholders in local governance arenas: co-consultation; co-deliberation; co-design; co-delivery; co-evaluation (Borgonovi and Sancino, 2014: 7–8).

The arena of co-consultation refers to situations where the engagement of external stakeholders is aimed at gathering ideas, information and contributions, although the final decision remains in the traditional circuit of representative democracy.

The arena of co-deliberation is characterised by the joint processes of politicians and managers making policy decisions together with external stakeholders. Some examples of

these experiences are represented by deliberative arenas like those developed in participatory budgeting experiences.

The arena of co-design describes the processes where public managers engage with external stakeholders for co-designing public services. Examples of practices that fit into this area are, for example, focus groups for co-designing social services that are developed with all the actors of the community active in some welfare-related services. The arena of co-delivery describes the situation where external stakeholders are involved in the concrete delivery of public services. Finally, the last governance arena is represented by the engagement of external stakeholders and citizens for practices of co-evaluation of public services and public policies. Some examples can be found in the popular juries and citizens' evaluation panels of public services (Borgonovi and Sancino, 2014: 7–8).

Stakeholder management in local governance arenas

Stakeholder management can be defined as a series of principles, tools and processes with the aims of identifying, involving, and managing the relationships with stakeholders (Freeman 1984; Frooman 1999; Mitchell et al. 1997). One of the main peculiarity of stakeholder management in the public domain is that it is developed by both politicians and/or managers. Bryson (2004) identified four main categories of activities in stakeholder management: (i) organising participation; (ii) creating ideas for strategic interventions; (iii) building a winning coalition around proposal development, review and adoption; and (iv) implementing, monitoring, and evaluating strategic interventions.

Stakeholder management comprises several stages of activities whose are interlocked and repetitive (Cleland 1998). More specifically, Archer (2003) identified five main stages: (i) identifying; (ii) analysing; (iii) planning and scheduling; (iv) executing; and (v) monitoring. In Figure 6.1, we slightly readapted the stakeholder cycle from Archer (2003), identifying the following five key stages: (1) stakeholder identification; (2) stakeholder mapping; (3) stakeholder engagement design; (4) stakeholder interaction; and (5) stakeholder evaluation.

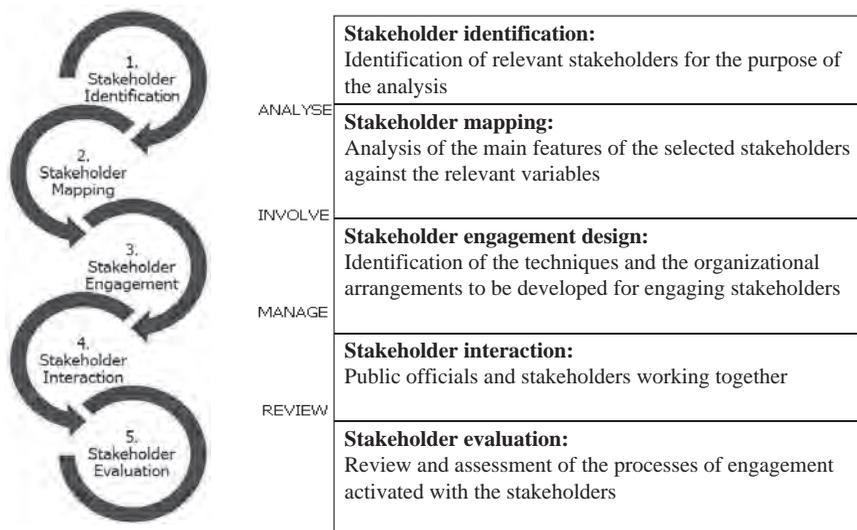


Figure 6.1 The five stages of the stakeholder management cycle

The first phase – *stakeholder identification* – is the identification of relevant stakeholders for the purpose of the engagement; this identification is dynamic (it may change over time) and depends from the issue and from the perspective taken for the analysis. The second phase – *stakeholder mapping* – consists in the analysis of the main features of the relevant stakeholders (identified as such in the previous phase) against the relevant variables for the issue considered. For example, Mitchell et al. (1997) identified three main variables for analysing stakeholders (power, legitimacy, and urgency). Some public agencies have also developed stakeholder profile scorecards for profiling the main features of stakeholders (e.g. Victoria Government 2005). The third phase – *stakeholder engagement design* – aims at identifying the organisational arrangements to be employed for involving stakeholders: examples can be the creation of stakeholder advisory committees, and/or new organisational structures, like associations participated by all the stakeholders engaged. The fourth phase – *stakeholder interaction* – consists in the actual ‘management of the interactions’ with the stakeholders and this may differ depending on the technique adopted (some examples could be stakeholder meetings, public hearings open to everybody, focus groups, deliberative polling, etc.). The last phase – *stakeholder evaluation* – consists in a review and assessment of the processes of engagement activated with the external stakeholders and it might be based on subjective (perceptions) or objective measures (indicators).

Politicians and public managers managing external stakeholders: case illustrations from Italy

We provide below some concise examples of stakeholder engagement for each local governance arena above mentioned; case examples refer to experiences in Italy. A more detailed analysis of each case using the framework of the stakeholder management cycle is then presented in Table 6.1 below.

Florence: strategic plan

Florence is the capital city of the Tuscany region and it is the most populous city of the region, with approximately 382,000 inhabitants in the Municipality, and over 1,520,000 in the Metropolitan area. The idea to have a strategic plan emerged in the early 2000s on the political initiative of the Mayor Leonardo Domenici following other experience of strategic planning in place in other European cities (e.g. Lille, Barcelona, Turin, etc.). The main goal was to build a shared vision of socio-economic development. The strategic plan was one of the first initiatives where external stakeholders had been involved in a structured way by the municipality for working together on co-planning.

Municipality of Grottammare: participatory budgeting

Grottammare is a small to medium town located in the Centre of Italy. It has almost 16,000 inhabitants. The Municipality of Grottammare has a previous history of about twenty years of inclusive decision-making processes, and it is considered the most exemplary case in Italy for participatory budgeting. Indeed, in 1994 a new political coalition known as ‘Participation and Solidarity’ organised a system of neighbourhood assemblies as a first attempt at participatory democracy. The main reasons for implementing the citizen involvement schemes were a strong political will to put the citizens (and their rights) at the centre of the policy and the willingness to experiment new innovative forms of participation. A previous study (Fedele et al. 2005) on the experience of Grottammare found as key elements the important role of the Mayor

in introducing the participatory budgeting and the political and ideological emphasis that was given to this experience.

Municipality of Lecco: co-design of social services

Lecco is a city of about 50,000 inhabitants in Lombardy region, in the Northern Italy. The Municipality of Lecco has almost ten years of experience in social services co-design. The co-design experience developed for two main reasons: (i) new laws promoting co-design initiatives have been introduced, and (ii) two public managers (the secretary general and the head of the social services) pushed for innovations into the sector.

Municipality of Reggio Emilia: co-delivery of sport services

Reggio Emilia is a city with about 170,000 inhabitants. It is located in the Northern Italy, in the Emilia-Romagna region. Historically the Municipality of Reggio Emilia developed numerous experiences of stakeholder engagement, and it is considered one of the most innovative public sector agencies in Italy with respect to these issues. The main reason to implement co-delivery was to find new forms for sport services delivery in a time of financial crisis.

Municipality of Piacenza: a popular jury

Piacenza is a city of about 100,000 inhabitants, which is located in Northern Italy, in Emilia-Romagna region. In the Municipality of Piacenza other stakeholder engagement experiences had previously been implemented. However, two main reasons prompted the creation of the popular jury in 2011. First, a strong political and managerial will to obtain feedback from citizens about the quality of public policies and services promoted. Second, the municipality leaders wanted to integrate the social reporting system previously activated with the new participating tool of the popular jury.

Conclusions

This chapter has briefly summarised the evolution of the studies on the relationships between politics and administration in public institutions such as local governments from Wilson and Weber to the present day, characterised by networks, collaborations and interactive governance.

Summing up, in contemporary times, politicians and public managers are placed in new relationships with different stakeholders; should play new roles like for example meta-governance for politicians and network design for public managers; and both serve as essential catalysts, conveners, and nurturers of efforts to increase the problem-solving capacity of their communities and improve the quality of their democracies. Accordingly, we are probably in the need to update and to conceptualise the relationships between politics and administration by framing a new complementarity model, characterised by an accountable system of checks and balances and based on politicians, managers and stakeholders together responsible for the pursuing of outcomes of public interests.

We wish to outline five promising research avenues that in our view need to be addressed in the future. First, there is the need to continue to study the new identities and roles played by politicians and managers in current contexts; for example, as Jeffares and Skelcher (2011: 1253) argued: ‘how public managers themselves construct their role as actors in a democratic arena and what implications this has for their role in shaping and designing the arrangements for

Table 6.1 Stakeholder management in local governance arenas: the role of different actors

<i>Stakeholder management cycle</i>	<i>Co-planning</i>	<i>Co-deliberation</i>	<i>Co-design</i>	<i>Co-delivery</i>	<i>Co-evaluation</i>
<i>Stakeholder identification</i>	Stakeholders have been identified through snowball sampling by politicians, managers, stakeholders and consultants.	Stakeholders were all citizens resident in a given neighbourhood. Politicians identified the stakeholders to be engaged.	Open tender to all the organisations working in the welfare sector. Managers identified the stakeholders to be engaged.	Expression of interest addressed to all the voluntary organisations working in the sports sector. Managers and politicians identified the stakeholders to be engaged.	Stratified sampling plus invitation to all the associations operating in the eight neighbourhood councils. Consultants identified the stakeholders to be engaged.
<i>Stakeholder Mapping</i>	Informal analysis conducted by politicians and consultants. Some stakeholders marked as 'relevant'.	Informal analysis conducted by politicians.	Stakeholders analysed by managers within a formal and explicit procedure.	Informal analysis conducted by managers and politicians.	Informal analysis conducted by consultants and politicians.
<i>Stakeholder engagement design</i>	Ad hoc organising committee, scientific committee and a new organisation has also been created.	Six neighbourhood committees have been created.	An ad hoc organisational structure of the Municipality has been created.	Agreement between local government agency and groups of citizens.	Two public meetings and various working groups.
<i>Stakeholder interaction</i>	Managed and supervised by consultants and stakeholders.	Managed by politicians.	Managed by managers.	Managed by managers.	Managed by consultants.
<i>Stakeholder evaluation</i>	Formal evaluation conducted by consultants and stakeholders.	Informal evaluation conducted by politicians.	Formal evaluation conducted by public managers and stakeholders.	Informal evaluation conducted by public managers.	Informal evaluation conducted by consultants and politicians.

network governance?' Similarly, at what point is the awareness of our politicians of what meta-governance is and how can they do exercise these new roles? And, again, what is the content of the managerial work played by politicians and what is the content of political work played by managers and how are they evolving?

Second, we need to understand the critical skills that public managers and politicians need for operating in the new contexts (e.g. Baddeley 2008; Manzie and Hartley 2013). What are the critical skills for playing meta-governance for politicians and for public managers for designing hard and soft governance structures and processes? What is the role played by public managers as intermediaries between state and civil society?

Third, technology is changing our lives, our social relationships, organisations and societies. So, how are social networks impacting on the relationship between politics and administration in the democratic governance of public institutions?

Fourth, we have argued that the relationship between politics and administration should also integrate different kind of stakeholders. Accordingly, we need to investigate how these relationships are happening in a context of interactive governance paying attention to issues like trust, power structure, and democratic performance. For doing so, it is necessary to employ a more complex and systemic approach for viewing at politicians, managers and other stakeholders. Moreover, if we think about the informality and the interactivity of governance processes, we find that reflections on the role of democracy and of political officials are needed.

Fifth, future studies should recognise the different positions of politicians and public managers in the organisation, better distinguishing among top-, senior-, middle- and street-level managers, as well as in local governments: the mayor, members of the cabinet and city councillors in different institutions.

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