

## Political boundary spanning

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# Political boundary spanning: politicians at the interface between collaborative governance and representative democracy

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## ABSTRACT

Research finds that productive interfaces between collaborative and bureaucratic forms of governance hinges on the extent to which public managers act as competent boundary spanners who process information, accommodate communication and align and coordinate behavior, and it seems likely that politicians have an equally important role to play in aligning processes and arenas of collaborative governance with representative democracy. The empirical forms that political boundary making takes are examined in a study of 28 cases of local, regional or national level policy-making in nine Western countries. This study indicates that there is considerable variation in the way politicians perform political boundary spanning particularly with respect to their degree of engagement in collaborative policy-making arenas and the focus of their boundary-spanning activities. Furthermore, the study shows that collaborative governance tends to go best in tandem with representative democracy in those cases where politicians perform both hands off and hands on boundary-spanning activities.

## KEYWORDS

Boundary spanners; collaborative governance; politicians; political leadership; case studies; database

## Introduction

In much of the collaborative and participatory governance research, the involvement of relevant and affected citizens and stakeholders in governing society is assumed to take place within a context of representative democracy (Edelenbos, 2005; Koppenjan, Kars, & Voort, 2009; Torfing, Peters, Pierre, & Sørensen, 2012). Yet little conceptual and empirical work has been undertaken to understand how collaborative modes of governing actually interface with the actors, structures and processes of representative democracy. There is a growing body of research scrutinizing how public managers operate at the intersection between collaborative and bureaucratic modes of governance (O’Flynn, Blackman, & Halligan, 2014; van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a; Williams, 2012). The term boundary spanning has been developed to describe the situated, purposeful and flexible effort to accommodate and guide cross-institutional conflict resolution, communication and coordination (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a). While research has

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considered public managers as boundary spanners, there are very few studies of how, and to what effect, politicians span the boundaries between collaborative governance arenas and policy-making within the traditional institutions of representative democracy. Indeed, it is fair to say that politicians are the forgotten actors in research on collaborative governance. A few studies have pointed to variations in the way politicians are involved in initiating, monitoring and endorsing collaborative governance processes (Edelenbos, van Meerkerk, & Koppenjan, 2017; Edelenbos, van Schie, & Gerrits, 2010; Koppenjan et al., 2009; Torfing, Sørensen, & Fotel, 2009). Moreover, recent theories of political leadership and democratic representation stress the relational and interactive aspects of what democratic political leadership entails. They contend that political leadership involves an ongoing effort to ensure mutual understanding between political leaders and members of the political community of what is being represented, and how (Burns, 2003; Keohane, 2012; Lees-Marshment, 2015; Nye, 2008; Rosanvallon, 2011; Sørensen, 2020; Torfing & Ansell, 2017; Urbinati, 2011). They suggest that the key to democratic political leadership is to strengthen the dialogue between policymaking in collaborative governance arenas and institutions of representative democracy, such as government cabinets, representative assemblies, councils and legislative committees.

In this article, we explore how politicians seek to bridge the gap between the collaborative governance arenas and the traditional institutions of representative democracy. Governments worldwide are increasingly involving stakeholders and citizens in policy-making in collaborative governance arenas. They assume, like many scholars of public policy and governance, that collaborative governance arenas can work within or at least alongside the conventional processes of policy-making in representative democracy (Edelenbos et al., 2010; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007). We develop the concept of political boundary spanning and then explore how politicians operate in the intersection between policymaking within collaborative arenas and policymaking within the traditional institutions of representative democracy. More specifically, we empirically examine if, and how politicians perform political boundary spanning. Our empirical findings inform various propositions about how politicians can promote the alignment of policymaking in collaborative governance arenas and representative democracy through different forms of political boundary spanning. We define policy alignment as a mutual adjustment of policy agendas, policy processes and policy output (Pieters, Dimkov, & Pavlovic, 2012).

We begin with a discussion of collaborative policy-making focusing on its assumed contribution to representative democracy and why we should expect tensions between the different logics of these domains. Next, we introduce the concept of 'boundary spanning' and develop the notion of political boundary spanning. We then turn to practice to explore how politicians perform political boundary spanning at the interface between collaborative governance arenas and institutions of representative democracy. Our empirical analysis draws on 28 cases of local, regional or national level policy-making in nine Western countries. Our findings show that there is considerable variation in the way politicians operate on the interface between collaborative arenas and representative democracy. Those politicians who do enact some sort of political boundary-spanning display significant variance with respect to how closely they engage with the actors in the collaborative governance arenas and when in the policymaking process the political boundary spanning is taking place. Moreover, there is considerable diversity between cases regarding how many politicians are engaged in political boundary

spanning and the level of formalization of the political boundary-spanning activities. Also, our data suggest that there is a connection between how much politicians perform political boundary spanning and the level of policy alignment between collaborative governance and representative democracy.

## Collaborative policymaking

All over the Western world, governments are employing various forms of collaborative governance aimed at bringing together actors from different levels and agencies within the public sector, as well as civil society and business, in a shared effort to govern society (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). In their celebrated book Emerson and Nabatchi (2015, p. 18) define collaborative governance as:

*“the processes and structures of public policy decision-making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished”.*

This definition pinpoints that collaborative governance not only refers to the involvement of relevant and affected societal actors in the management of societal problems, but also in decision-making in close proximity to policymaking within the traditional political institutions of representative democracy. Some researchers indicate that collaborative or interactive governance processes often come next to or on top of regular processes and institutions of policymaking in governments (Edelenbos, 2005; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007; Torfing et al., 2012). For the purpose of this paper, however, it seems fruitful to maintain a distinction between the development of agendas and policy proposals within collaborative governance arenas on the one hand, and policy-making practices within the realm of representative democracy on the other.

There are different strands of collaborative governance research, each with their specific focus. Collaborative management research mainly focuses on how relevant and affected public and private stakeholders collaborate to solve wicked policy problems, implement public policies and get things done (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Nabatchi, Gastil, Leighninger, & Weiksner, 2012). Co-creation research points out how collaboration can stimulate the creation of joint ownership to governance processes (Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015). Collaborative public innovation research is interested in how collaboration between actors with different perspectives, ideas, competencies and experiences triggers political innovation and service innovation (Bommert, 2010; Sørensen, 2017; Torfing, 2016). Finally, participatory and deliberative governance research is concerned with how citizen engagement in political decision-making can empower citizens, promote public deliberation and strengthen democracy (Fung & Wright, 2003; Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004; Edelenbos, 2005; Fisher, 2006; Hendriks, 2006; Warren, 2009; Dryzek, 2009; Innes & Booher, 2010; Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017).

Notwithstanding the diversity of these different research strands, they share a number of common themes that are useful to highlight for our purposes.

First, the listed literatures implicitly hold onto the democratic norm that legitimacy can be strengthened when citizens and other relevant and 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 (Sørensen, 2020).

Second, the literatures above all point to potential tensions between bureaucratic and collaborative forms of governance. Empirically much of the focus has been on finding ways to reduce these tensions: for example, how can we better design citizen deliberation, innovative problem solving, and collaborative governance processes in ways that do not undermine the larger system of public governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008, 2012; Buuren, 2009; Johnston, Hicks, Nan, & Auer, 2010; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

Third, the above-mentioned strands of the literature focus predominantly on the role and agency of public managers in collaborative governance. For example, how public managers initiate, guide, structure and facilitate collaborative governance processes. Concepts such as metagovernance and network management, facilitative leadership and integrative leadership have been introduced to capture how public managers can promote collaborative governance (Bussu and Galanti, 2018; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). Concepts such as boundary spanning have been developed to describe how public managers connect collaborative governance arenas to public bureaucracies (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018b; Williams, 2002, 2012)

This article builds on these studies focusing particularly on how collaborative governance interfaces with the institutions and processes of representative democracy. We are specifically interested in the agency and activities of politicians at this interface. We take seriously the central role that elected officials play in both making, authorizing and legitimating collective decisions in systems of representative democracy. When collaborative governance occurs in the context of representative government it necessarily interfaces with politicians who are engaged in more traditional policy-making tasks such as debating, formulating and making decisions on how to solve collective problems, and with what resources. It also challenges political behavior in finding innovative ways to adequately preparing for and responding to collaborative modes of governance (Edelenbos et al., 2017).

This article examines how politicians operate as boundary-spanners at the interface between collaborative governance and policy-making in representative democracy. A central conjecture underpinning this research endeavor is that just as managerial boundary spanning performed by public managers is essential for promoting a constructive interplay between collaborative and bureaucratic modes of governance (see Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016), political boundary spanning carried out by politicians could be vital for advancing a productive co-existence between collaborative policy-making in representative democracy. Emerging theories of interactive political leadership suggest that politicians do indeed have a key role to play in linking and aligning policy-making in collaborative arenas and representative democracy, but empirically we know very little about if and how politicians take on this role as political boundary spanners (Sørensen, 2020; Torfing & Ansell, 2017). In addition to specifying that boundary-spanning aims to accommodate two-directional communication and alignment, it helps to clarify the difference between political and managerial boundary spanning. While managerial boundary spanning is important for aligning cross-sectoral efforts to solve wicked policy problems, political boundary spanning can mediate political conflicts through the alignment of political visions, goals and strategies. Moreover, while managerial boundary spanning can potentially enhance effectiveness and innovation in policy implementation and service

provision, political boundary spanning may promote innovative political strategizing, and fairer and more legitimate policy processes and outputs.

## Boundary spanning and politicians

We turn now to consider the concept of ‘boundary spanning’ and how it might be applied to the world of politics and to politicians. Boundaries play a central role in all aspects of human existence. They provide structure and meaning in an otherwise highly complex world (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a: 17ff). Boundaries delimit and define institutionalized fields of action; they establish enabling rules and norms and prescribe certain patterns of behavior. Boundaries also reduce uncertainties by defining roles for actors (for example, politicians, civil servants, citizens, network partners) within particular fields of action. While boundaries can create order within a specific field of action, they can limit the sharing of images, communication codes and coordination norms and thus hamper interaction across fields (Howes et al., 2015).

In this article, we are interested in the boundary spanning between two institutionalized fields of action in relation to policy making, namely, collaborative governance and representative democracy. In contrast to some governance researchers (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015), we view collaborative governance arenas as institutionalized fields of action with a specific *modus operandi* and a particular dynamic and set of rules and norms. We have summarized the key differences between these two ideal-types in Table 1, which draws on theories of collaborative governance and representative democracy. This table offers is useful for analytical purposes; real life is of course far more varied and complex, as our empirical findings further below demonstrate.

The *modus operandi* of collaborative policy-making is to involve relevant and affected actors in a collaborative endeavor to define and pursue a joint purpose (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Consensus-oriented collaboration functions as a legitimating point of reference and organizing principle for formulating policies and for distributing influence between actors (Booher, 2004; Robertson & Choi, 2012). Moreover, collaboration in public policy demands mutual adjustment and a commitment to solving collective problems (ref?). In practical terms, it requires working with informal rules to get things done to produce concrete results (Ayres, 2017).

In representative democracy, the political *modus operandi* is electoral competition between parties and/or individual politicians to win support for policy proposals. The operational dynamic is agonistic or adversarial, i.e. that policy-making takes the form of a battle for political influence between actors who pursue different political projects and positions of power. The political conflicts are rooted in more or less ideologically founded programmatic differences and formal rules are perceived as an indispensable guard

**Table 1.** Collaborative and representative policy-making as different action domains.

Fields of action	Polymaking in collaborative polymaking	Polymaking in representative democracy
Modus operandi	Collaborative	Competitive
Operational dynamics	Consensual	Agonistic/adversarial
Norm	Pragmatic	Programmatic
Rules	Informal	Formal



against misuse of political power and a key means to regulate political power battles and secure accountability, equality and fairness in political bargaining and negotiation processes (Manin, 1997).

To make sense of how policymaking in these two different fields of action (collaborative governance and representative democracy) may co-exist and align, the concept of boundary spanning is useful. For example, in the field of public administration and governance scholars have applied the idea of boundary spanning to understand the work that actors (mostly administrators/public managers) undertake in cross-boundary collaborations (e.g. Agranoff, 2012; Ansell & Gash, 2008; O'Flynn, 2009; Osborne, 2006). Boundary spanners are actors who connect between different fields of action by creating institutional, informational and relational linkages and ties (Ernst and Chrobot-Mason, 2010, p. 222). They are defined as 'people who proactively scan the organizational environment, employ activities to cross organizational and institutional boundaries, generate and mediate the information flow and coordinate between their "home" organization or organizational unit and its environment, and connect processes and actors across these boundaries' (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a, p. 58). From this definition it follows that boundary spanners are actors who operate as 'institutional infiltrators' (see: Miller, 2008); they identify relevant actors and resources, initiate crosscutting activities, facilitate mutual communication and build relationships between actors from different domains. Moreover, the definition indicates that a boundary spanner inhabits one of the involved domains. Although this belonging prevents neutrality, it might provide actors with the centrality, relevance and authority they need to perform boundary spanning. Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2018a, p. 58) identify *four key tasks* that (managerial) boundary spanners perform: 1) they develop and maintain cross-boundary actor relationships; 2) they align and coordinate activities and processes across boundaries; 3) they promote information and knowledge exchange; and 4) they detect and pursue windows of opportunity that pave the way for a political alignment. van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2018a, p. 111) identify four profiles for boundary spanners: fixer, bridge, broker, and innovator. The fixer and broker roles are typically hands-on in being active in the collaborative processes, whereas the bridging and innovating roles are more distant and hands-off, providing resources to stimulate collaboration across domains, levels and organizations.

Although this definition and list of tasks mainly aims to capture managerial boundary spanning and tends to depict boundary spanners as public (or private) managers, it provides useful valuable building blocks for defining the boundary-spanning work that politicians undertake in cross-institutional policy-making processes. Here we introduce the concept of *political boundary spanning* to describe the strategic effort by political actors to link policy-making within the collaborative governance arenas to policymaking within the institutions of representative system.

Our focus here is explicitly on appointed or elected politicians at national, regional and local levels of governance and the political work they do publicly and privately to span collaborative governance arenas and the conventional policy-making processes within representative democracy. Boundary spanning between these arenas is often carried out by public managers, and sometimes also by civil society representatives. However, we focus here on politicians because of their central role in representative democracy as legitimate decision-makers with authorizing power (Torfing et al., 2012).



We contend it is particularly interesting to learn more about how and with what consequences political representatives perform political boundary spanning between these two arenas. It is a political activity that takes place in an inherently political terrain in which political actors fight over political agenda setting and the formulation of political visions, ideas, goals and strategies.

Our definition of political boundary spanning is open in terms of the more specific strategies, such as communication, networking, and leadership. However, with reference to recent theories of meta-governance (Torfing et al., 2012), and interactive political leadership (Sørensen, 2020), political boundary spanning can both be performed hands-off and hands-on, both of which allow politicians to influence and guide the collaborative governance arena while allowing it some degree of political autonomy. Hands-off boundary spanning refers to a political, legal and/or fiscal framing of collaborative governance arenas. Political framing takes the form of general policy goals that set the overall agenda and direction for collaborative policymaking; legal framing consists in reflexive regulations that set the ground rules and design of the collaborative activity in terms of space and time as well as with regard to composition and accountability? of participants; fiscal framing lays out the conditions for achieving and spending funding. Hands-off boundary spanning can be more or less intense. Highly intensive hands-off political boundary spanning puts a strong pressure and incentive on collaborative policy arenas to adapt to the political goals and aspirations of policymakers in representative policymaking arenas. However, hands-off boundary spanning can also take the form of a soft guidance of collaborative governance arenas. The profile of bridger (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a) comes close to this kind of hands-off political boundary spanning, as politicians work to create connections between actors from different organizations, for example, by providing resources to stimulate cross-boundary endeavors. At a distance, they might arrange meetings to bring actors with different organizational backgrounds together, or appoint skilled persons (brokers) to take forward newly established connections, or prevent them from dying out.

While hands-off political boundary spanning takes place at a distance through a strategic design of the conditions under which collaborative governance arenas operate, hands-on boundary spanning typically takes place through face-to-face interactions between a political boundary spanner and actors within a collaborative governance arena. One form of hands-on political boundary spanning is facilitative leadership which involves promoting collaboration between relevant and affected actors at the table and promoting collaboration between them. Another form is active participation in the activities, debates and decision-making in collaborative governance arenas. Hands-on political boundary spanning can also be more or less intensive depending on how eager the boundary spanner is to align the policy agendas, policy processes and policy outputs of the collaborative governance arena and policymaking arenas in representative democracy. Hands-on political boundary spanning coincides with the profile of what van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2018a) label as the 'broker'. This role is highly involved in the actual governance processes; it involves actively facilitating and mediating concrete interactions and dialogues among actors in the governance arena as well with representatives (executives, politicians, civil servants) 'back home' in the governmental organization. These boundary-spanning politicians are more heavily involved in the negotiation,

looking for opportunities to get support from home organization and balancing informality and formality.

Political boundary spanners face two challenges. First, it is far from easy to strike a productive level of intensity in the exercise of political boundary spanning. Overly intense political boundary spanning can undermine the productive dynamics within collaborative governance arenas, while loose political boundary spanning may result in weak policy alignment. Second, it is far from easy to secure mutuality in policy alignment between political authorities in formal political institutions and relevant and affected stakeholders in collaborative governance arenas. Mutual policy alignment relies on two-directional policy adjustment, i.e. that collaborative governance arenas adjust their policies to those of the representative policymaking arenas, and vice-versa. Hands-off political boundary spanning is well suited to promoting the adjustment of policymaking in collaborative governance arenas to policymaking in representative policy arenas, but it is ill-suited to ensuring that representative policy arenas adjust their policy agendas, policy processes and policy outputs to policymaking in collaborative governance arenas. Hence, in the latter situation, there is limited opportunity for political boundary spanners to explain the political sentiments of politicians and dynamics of representative policymaking arenas to actors in collaborative governance arenas but also to feed the knowledge and insights they harvest from these arenas into the political processes in government cabinets, representative assemblies, councils and committees. The fact that hands-off political boundary spanning is mainly suited to adjust policymaking in collaborative governance arenas to policymaking in the formal institutions of representative democracy suggests that policy alignment may prosper from a combination of hands-off and hands-on forms of political boundary spanning, not necessarily carried out by one and the same politician but as a collective of politicians involved in specific boundary-spanning activities. Moreover, we might suspect that some level of intensity in boundary spanning is needed to promote a productive level of policy alignment.

We will employ the distinction between hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning to structure the empirical findings regarding how politicians perform political boundary spanning. Moreover, we will explore levels of intensity in political boundary spanning and also analyze how different aspects of this activity are distributed between politicians and to what extent it is formalized in terms of political goals, accountability measures, legal requirements and funding schemes, leadership positions and forms of participation in collaborative governance arenas.

## Method

In this paper, we make use of the ‘Qualitative Collaborative Governance Case Database’, which is described in detail in the introductory article to this special issue. Empirically we are interested in identifying the different ways in which politicians engage in the political boundary spanning at the interface between collaborative governance arenas and policymaking within the institutions of representative democracy.

The database offers a broad variety of cases of collaborative policy-making in different countries, at different levels in the political system and in a variety of policy areas. Many of the cases provide valuable insights into how politicians perform political boundary spanning. In particular, the database helped to illuminate if and how politicians in each of

the selected cases performed hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning, when in the political process they did so, whether or not the activity was formal or informal, and if the political boundary spanning involved one single politician or the larger collective of politicians. Moreover, the database provided indication as to whether the level of alignment of policymaking between the two arenas was weak, moderate or strong. The term 'weak' refers to a situation of diverse political agendas, policy-making processes that are poorly aligned in terms of the timing and outputs of the policy process between the two policymaking arenas. 'Moderate' refers to a situation where the policy agendas, policy processes and policy outputs are somewhat attuned to each other, and 'strong' indicates considerable mutual adjustment has taken place. However, although the database allows us to assess the level of political boundary spanning and the degree of policy alignment in each case, it does not illuminate the actual causality between boundary spanning and policy alignment. Nevertheless, it provides sufficient ground for developing propositions to be tested in further research.

The database with its 54 quantitative questions and 7 sections with qualitative descriptions also allowed us to select relevant cases showing how politicians perform political boundary spanning between collaborative governance arenas and formal representative assemblies and committees within democratic political systems. Thus, the quantitative data allowed us to select 28 relevant cases of collaborative policy-making out of a total sum of 40 cases. The excluded cases consisted of three cases where the purpose of the collaboration was not policy-making, one case from a non-western country, and eight cases where politicians were not involved in the collaborative governance arena. As a next step, we divided the remaining 28 cases into two sets of cases through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Set I consisted cases where the politicians were involved in some form of hands-off political boundary spanning only—they held the collaborative process to account and/or influenced the policy output. Set II consisted of 16 cases where politicians were involved in hands-off political boundary spanning *and* hands-on political boundary spanning—they participated in and/or performed leadership of the collaborative governance arena (See Appendix 1). The qualitative data proved to be valuable; in a number of instances, the case description clarified that the quantitative data were misleading in light of the actual events, and that a set II case was actually a set I case. In some cases, when the qualitative data were insufficient, we contacted the researchers and received additional information. That happened in six cases. The end result of our case selection is shown in [Table 2](#). Interestingly, we did not detect any cases of hands-on political boundary spanning, which were not accompanied by hands-off political boundary spanning.

## Key findings

The analysis of the 28 cases reveal that at the interface between collaborative governance arenas and institutions of representative democracy, there are a variety of ways in which politicians perform political boundary spanning. We found variations in approaches to boundary spanning both between politicians within individual cases, as well as between cases. Below we discuss some of the main variations across the cases with respect to how and with what level of intensity politicians enact political boundary spanning. Our discussion proceeds in three sections. First, we analyze cases where politicians solely perform hands-off political boundary spanning. Next, we move on to

**Table 2.** Overview of 28 analyzed cases\*.

Cases of hands-off PBS only**	Cases of combination of hands-on and hands-off PBS***
Food labelling policy, Australia	Peri-urban development, Netherlands
Container deposit legislation, Australia	Collaborative policy-making in representative democracy; Denmark
Blackfoot watershed challenge, USA	Community Enterprise Het Klokhuis, Netherlands
Counter terrorism, Netherlands	Community Enterprise De meevaart, Netherlands
Reduction of Family Violence, Australia	Area C: Milan, congestion reduction strategy, Italy
Rhode Island's Salt Ponds, USA	Delaware Inland Bays; USA
Foodborne disease outbreak, Germany	Lake Tahoe, USA
Infant mortality, USA	Tampa Bay, USA
Living Lab Stratumseind, Netherlands	Tillamook Bay (?), USA
Revitalization of Central Dandenong, Australia	Combating Illiteracy, City A, Netherlands
Aquaculture Partnership, USA	Combating Illiteracy, City B, Netherlands
Desert Tortoise Habitat Conservation, USA	Combating Illiteracy, City C, Netherlands
	Elite-Citizen Collaborations in NSW Parliament's Energy Inquiry, USA
	The Stockholm Neighbourhood Renewal Program, Sweden
	Polymaking committees, Svelvik, Norway
	Mitigating climate change, Netherlands

\* More detailed tables to be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

\*\* Hands-off: Politicians hold to account and/or influence but do not participate and/or lead.

\*\*\* Hands-off and hands-on: Politicians participate and lead, and hold to account and/or influence.

analyzing cases where politicians combine hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning. Here we identify a temporal variation across our cases: that political boundary spanning tends to be most intensive either in the beginning or end of the collaboration process and generally limited in the middle where policies tend to be formulated. In the third section, we discuss how political boundary spanning relates to policy alignment.

### ***Hands-off political spanning***

In all the 28 cases we considered politicians perform some kind of hands-off political boundary spanning. The politicians in Set 1 (12 cases) only performed hands-off political boundary spanning, whereas those in Set 2 performed as a mix of hands-on and hands-off (See Table 1 and Appendix 1). We have summarised in Appendix 1 the different ways that politicians in Set 1 performed hands-off boundary spanning. What we find in these 12 cases is that the hands-off political boundary spanning performed by politicians was supplemented by administrative boundary spanning performed by public managers. In those instances where the collaborative governance arena was initiated by a representative policymaking arena, the main approach to hands-off political boundary spanning was to design the goal and purpose of the collective arena and to hold it to account. In the case of collaborative governance arenas that are initiated from below the main way politicians performed hands-off boundary spanning was to fund schemes that incentivize the collaborative governance arena to adjust their goals and activities to those of the representative policymaking arena.

Overall the general picture from the 12 cases in Set 1 is that the hands-off political boundary spanning is not very intensive. The politicians act as bridgers, making sure that they infuse connections between the governance arenas and institutions of representative democracy by providing information to critical knowledge brokers and promoting connection between key actors from the collaborative arena and government institutions. Even though strategies are performed to link the two arenas, in these cases the relevant

politicians operated at a distance and were not involved in the actual policymaking process to promote the collaborative arenas and their outcomes within the conventional institutions of representative democracy. Indeed, in these cases politicians appear reluctant to engage in the design of links between the conventional policy-making processes and collaborative governance. The linkages appear to be particularly weak in the middle-phase of the collaboration when policies are formulated. When boundary spanning occurs, politicians tend to focus their efforts on defining the initial policy goals, the composition of participants and holding the process to account in its final stages.

In the case of The Neighbourhood Renewal Programme in Stockholm, for instance, politicians at the central level of the city promoted the organizing of neighborhood-level collaborative governance arenas with links to the decision-making bodies. However, as in many other cases of participative governance, specifics about *how* the two arenas were to communicate and coordinate their policies were vague if not obscure (cf. Hertting & Klijn, 2017). By intention or by inability, the politicians did not invest much energy in thinking about and designing the ‘switching mechanisms’ (Danielsson & Hertting, 2007) between the two arenas. This task was handed over to district-level politicians and administrators with limited mandates within the policy-making system. We can refer to this as ‘half-hearted’ hands-off political boundary spanning; central-level politicians contribute rhetorically and financially to a large-scale collaboration, in this case running over many years, in nine different neighborhoods and involving some thousand citizens, with only vague ideas about how the outcome of collaboration should be linked to policy-making within the political institutions.

We see the same pattern in the case of a collaborative process on peri-urban development in the Netherlands. Here we see that politicians were very reluctant to get involved in the collaborative process and kept a safe distance of the collaborative governance arenas and processes by providing general frameworks (policy goals, starting points, and organizational and financial means) which were written down in a covenant (cf. Edelenbos et al., 2017). Politicians were keen to maintain a close connection between the collaborative process and the regular political processes of policymaking. During the course of the collaborations, the boundary-spanning activities of the politicians faded out and left the actual boundary-spanning activities to public managers. The political climate had changed and the important boundary spanners of the first hour were not very active again and replaced by other persons. The boundary-spanning activities were not institutionalized, although there was an attempt to create a political portal of politicians to create an institutional arrangement between collaborative governance and conventional political institutions and policy-making, but this failed in the end due to political maneuvering. As a result, the political boundary spanning faded in later stages of the collaborative process.

Such a loose and somewhat symbolic hands-off approach to political boundary spanning allows politicians to demonstrate that they are ‘doing something’ to address the particular policy issue under consideration, for example, by delegating problem solving to a collaborative arena. They can signal that vital policy work is being done without having to actively support or endorse its outcomes.

On the other hand, the distanced role of politicians may also be seen as a sign of their confidence in the collaborative process and a sincere wish to respect a more self-organized governance process where not only policy-substance but also the

organizational forms of collaboration and relations to representative policy-making are supposed to evolve more spontaneously. Regardless of intentions, however, it reduces the level of policy alignment.

In line with this, political hands-off spanning often takes place at the beginning of the collaborative process. Temporary initiatives through information campaigns or financial support aim to facilitate the start of collaboration in relation to representative policy-making. Hands-off efforts at political boundary spanning seem to be more of a vehicle or 'launching rocket' than a means to link collaborative governance processes with traditional representative institutions. For example, in the US case of Desert Tortoise Conservation, politicians initiated the process, provided financial support but then stayed well away from collaborative process that followed. Hands-on boundary spanning were instead carried out by a civil servant, a non-profit organization and hired consultant. The outcome was a quite weak alignment between the two processes. The most effective means of hands-off policy alignment in this and other cases appear to be special purpose funding schemes in the form of grants that incentivize collaborative policy arenas to align with the goals and perspectives of representative policymaking arenas. It is surprising that the use of grants is not more widespread in the cases.

Although this focus on the initial steps of the process seems most common, there are also some interesting exceptions. In the case of Counter terrorism collaboration in the Netherlands, a collaborative governance arena was set up through a ministerial decree and politicians also exerted influence on the collaborative arena. In this case, a parliamentary committee was set up in order to monitor and follow the collaborative governance process and the responsible minister also stressed the importance of evaluation as a mechanism to link the collaborative governance to the parliament and/or cabinet. After some time, however, the support diminished and the collaborative process suffered from severe budget cuts.

In a number of cases, politicians initiated the collaborative arena in the wake of a policy crisis, they tasked the arena to find a solution, but then they disengaged once the crisis has abated. This was the case in the German foodborne disease outbreak for instance. Here, politicians put pressure on public agencies to set up a cross-sectoral crisis management task force. Politicians endorsed the crisis solution developed in the collaborative governance arena – although they returned to the status quo once the crisis was over. On the one hand, this process could be seen as a successful crisis response whereby a representative policy-making arena delegates policymaking to a collaborative governance arena. However, on the other hand, this approach resulting in a lack of policy alignment. In this case, the politicians in the representative policymaking arenas did not take part in developing the solution; thus, they had little or no ownership of the solution and failed to use the insights from the collaborative process to inform future policymaking.

Our analysis of the 12 cases of hands-off political boundary spanning reveals that isolated hands-off political boundary spanning tends to create situations where politicians mainly aim to prevent a situation where they are forced to give up at least some parts of their power and privileged positions in policy-making. It also induces tensions in terms of norms and notions of accountability rendering 'institutional dilemmas' (Danielsson, Hertting & Klijn, 2017). For politicians, it might therefore appear to be quite reasonable and productive to keep some distance from the collaborative arena,



giving them enough ‘wriggle room’ should they need it to ignore any controversial policy recommendations emerging from the collaborative arena (See Boswell, 2016).

One example is the case of an inquiry into a controversial piece of environmental regulation, Container Deposit Legislation, in New South Wales, Australia. In this case, a minister commissioned a university professor to undertake the inquiry, which included extensive research as well as community consultation and stakeholder engagement. Rather than aligning the representative democracy policy process with the collaborative governance proposal, the government instead formed an alliance with some of the collaborating stakeholders. Since the inquiry and its collaborations were kept at a distance from the politicians and parliament, it was relatively easy for key politicians in the NSW Cabinet to keep distance from any outcome they did not want.

Above we have discussed variations we found within our Set I cases which involved only hands-off political boundary-spanning. Though by definition, hands-off boundary spanning is not passive or at a distance, empirically this seems often the case. We have also shown that passive or distant hands-off boundary spanning may have a reluctant ambition, and have suggested that ‘half-hearted’ boundary-spanning attempts might actually be a strategy for politicians to cope with the dilemmas the integration of collaborative governance and representative policy-making induce. From the politicians’ point of view, such ‘loose couplings’ to collaborative governance arenas create an opportunity to, on the one hand, show willingness to listen to all kinds of affected interests without solving the problem of aligning the different accountability logics, on the other (Danielsson, Hertting & Klijn, 2017). Such an interpretation fits nicely with the fact that hands-off boundary spanning often is performed at the beginning of the collaborative governance process. Ambiguous hands-off boundary spanning in early parts of the process might be conducive for the opportunities for more flexible and creative hands-on boundary spanning in latter phases, but also a strategy to keep some distance and wriggle room in relation to the collaborative process.

### ***Hands-off and hands-on political spanning***

We turn now to consider our Set II cases where politicians use a combination of hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning (see Table 1 and Appendix 2). Recall from our earlier discussion hands-on political boundary spanning involves politicians working to aligning the form and content of the collaborative process with policymaking in representative government, and vice versa. Hands-on political boundary spanning is also performed through face-to-face participation in or brokering of collaborative governance arenas by actually bringing people together and arranging dialogues.

A first noteworthy observation of the 16 cases in set II is that there is considerable variation with regard to the level of intensity in the activity of political boundary spanning between cases as well as between phases in the policymaking process. A second observation is that the level of formalization of hands-on involvement of politicians varies considerably between cases. Finally, the cases vary with regard to whether hands-on political boundary spanning is an individual or collective activity among the politicians.

As noted above, politicians in Set II all performed a combination of hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning. In nearly all these cases, politicians were involved



in designing the collaborative governance arena, and defining its purpose and providing funding. Moreover, there are politicians participating in, and performing leadership of, the collaborative policymaking process. In some cases, the hands-on and hands-off political boundary spanning is coordinated. In other cases, the link between the two aspects of political boundary spanning appears to be ad-hoc.

The intensity of the politician's hands-on political boundary spanning tends to be relatively low in all the 16 cases. Moreover, it varies a great deal in the course of the policy process in the same vein as in the 12 cases of hands-off political boundary spanning that is not combined with hands-on boundary spanning. Politicians seem to be mostly engaged in the initial stages where they invest their political legitimacy, authority and connections to mobilize stakeholders. In a few cases, hands-on political boundary spanning appears to be most intense in the final stages of the policymaking process.

There is considerable variation with regard to the level of formalization of hands-on political boundary-spanning activities between the 16 cases. In some cases, the political boundary spanning takes place in an informal and organic way. In other cases, it is formalized through hands-off institutional designs of leadership structures and composition of participants in the collaborative arena that place politicians central in the collaborative policymaking process. In a collaborative governance project on youth policy in Denmark, a selected number of politicians were formally assigned to participate in a collaborative policy-making arena with a group of young people. Though we may expect that voluntary-selected hands-on spanners are often more motivated than those designed-in, on the other hand, we may expect that the latter category might have a stronger mandate to perform. In the Danish case, the participating politicians reported back to relevant political committees (i.e. held to account), influenced the policy development within the collaborative arena through participation and finally supported the endorsement of the policy in municipal council. In a similar case of a formalized collaborative policy committee composed of politicians and citizens from Svelvik in Norway, a politician was formally assigned to plan and lead the meetings with assistance from a consultant or civil servant.

In the peri-urban development case in the Netherlands, which we referred to above, political boundary spanning was formalized in the form of 'political portal'. The portal was designed as an innovative institutional arrangement to facilitate the direct participation of politicians in debates with citizens and stakeholders in the collaborative process, and to monitor the community self-organization. However, the portal was highly politicized and in the end was not realized since politicians feared it would jeopardize the exercise of their traditional representative and controlling roles (cf. Edelenbos et al., 2017). Instead of adopting a boundary-spanning role, politicians stuck to their conventional roles in traditional political institutions.

In the Stockholm case on district renewal collaboration, attempts to perform hands-on political boundary spanning sometimes occurred in a more bottom-up fashion. However, in some neighborhoods such attempts by district-level politicians to actively participate and lead the collaborative arena were met with suspicion, if not hostility. Collaboration participants, consisting of local inhabitants, civil society associations and professionals, argued that the presence of politicians threatened the logic of innovative and pragmatic collaboration. In the case of the Community Enterprise De Meevaart in the Netherlands, the role of politicians was completely informal. Levels of formality do not seem to be

decisive for the intensity of the level of hands-on boundary spanning in the different cases, but some level of formalization appears to promote the level of coordination between hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning.

Finally, there is considerable variation between cases in data set II with regard to how many politicians are involved in the political boundary-spanning activities. We find that hands-off political boundary spanning tends to be a collective activity among politicians in government cabinets, representative assemblies and political committees, while hands-on political boundary spanning mostly involves individual politicians. Leading politicians tend to be involved in the performance of leadership of collaborative governance arenas in close dialogue with civil servants and/or civil society entrepreneurs, while both ordinary and leading politicians participate in the collaboration processes in these arenas. In the cases of hands-on spanning that we studied, there was typically one particularly active politician who stepped forward and engaged actively as a solo political boundary spanner. For instance, in two Dutch cases on urban development and community building leading politicians together with top civil servants played a crucial role, especially in the initial phases of the collaborative governance development. In these cases, politicians found it 'convenient' to involve public managers in the role of boundary spanners as in this way they could remain safely at a distance from the collaborative process.

In most of the cases, however, politicians did not act as the only boundary spanners. Leadership in our sample of cases was rather carried out by more than one category of actors most commonly in a coalition of politicians and public administrators and in some cases with consultants. Only in one or two cases, politicians seem to strive to build coalitions with civil society actors in order to perform collaborative governance leadership and boundary spanning. One of them is the development of a congestion reduction strategy in Milan, Italy where two politicians worked close together with civil society actors in all phases of the collaboration process.

### ***Political boundary spanning and policy alignment***

At a general level, the analysis of the 28 cases of political boundary spanning demonstrates that politicians enact political boundary spanning in diverse ways and with different intensity. In this final empirical section, we consider how differences in political boundary spanning affect the level of policy alignment between collaborative governance arenas and government policies and policies passed by representative assemblies.

A first observation is that there appears to be some pattern between how politicians perform political boundary spanning and the level of policy alignment in each case. In all 12 cases of 'stand alone' hands-off political boundary spanning (set I), the policy alignment between collaborative governance arenas and policymaking in representative democracy is either weak (9 cases) or moderate (3 cases). The reason for weak policy alignment seems to be either that politicians delegate policymaking to the collaborative arena without exerting influence (6 cases) or that there is competition between policymaking in the two arenas (3 cases). Moderate policy alignment is when governments and/or representative assemblies exert intensive political pressure onto the collaborative policy-making but the influence is mainly performed top-down and participants in the collaborative governance arena have few opportunities to influence policymaking in conventional representative arenas. Strategic funding schemes that intensify the

collaborative governance arenas to adjust to government policies appear to be of key importance when representative policymaking arenas aim to align policymaking in collaborative governance arenas to their political goals and aspirations. When politicians delegate or merely frame collaborative policymaking, it may result in fragmented politics and/or weak democratic authorization of policies, and when there is competition between the two policymaking arenas it is likely to produce political tensions.

There are more cases of moderate policy alignment in the cases where politicians combine hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning (4 cases), one case of moderate to strong policy alignment and two cases of strong policy alignment. In five of the nine cases of weak policy alignment, policymaking was delegated from the representative to collaborative policy arenas. In three cases, policy alignment was hampered by political conflicts between the two arenas. In one case the representative policymaking arena coopted policymaking in the collaborative governance arena. In the three cases with strong policy alignment, politicians were intensively engaged in hands-on political boundary spanning. These three cases provide useful insights into the importance of combining hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning for promoting strong policy alignment. A common theme across all these three cases is that there was *regular* and *ongoing* communication (both informal and formal) between politicians and actors in collaborative arena.

In the case of the community enterprise, De Meevaart, the collaboration was initiated in a partnership between politicians and stakeholders, and politicians participated on an informal basis in the collaboration in all its phases as well as in the leadership of the collaboration. The involved politicians were also actively promoting dialogue and information exchange between the collaborative governance arena and policymakers in representative policymaking arenas. The intense hands-on political boundary spanning was supported by hands-off political boundary spanning by way of funding and administrative support.

In the case of combatting illiteracy in City B, the collaboration was initiated by a partnership between politicians and a stakeholder. A leading politician was commissioned by a representative assembly to participate and assist in leading the collaborative governance arena. The politicians supported the hands-on political boundary spanning in all the phases of the collaboration through intense hands-off boundary spanning in the shape of funding, but the collaborative governance arena and the representative assemblies continued to disagree about the policy solution.

The third case is the development of a congestion reduction strategy in Milan. The government initiated the collaborative governance process, and secured the involvement of all the relevant actors. Politicians were mostly participating in the collaboration in its early stages, but two leading politicians were involved in the leadership through all phases in the collaborative policymaking. The leadership team (which also included civil servants) promoted a high level of communication between the collaborative governance arena and the representative policymaking arenas. Politicians in this case combined intense hands-on political boundary-spanning activities with hands-off political boundary spanning in the form of funding and general support for the activities and experimentation in the collaborative governance arena.

These three cases allow us to propose that a combination of intense hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning in all the phases of the policymaking process is essential for promoting strong policy alignment between collaborative governance arenas and policymaking in the traditional institutions of representative democracy.

## Conclusion

Various developments in public management and governance have led to an increased attention in boundary-spanning work, including a rising awareness of complexity, fragmentation and departmentalization of public sector organizations, increased calls for more integrated and citizen-oriented public service delivery, and recognition of the value of participation, co-production and community-led initiatives (O'Flynn et al., 2014; van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a; Williams, 2012). In public administration literature, there is of course longer attention to network management and networking (Kickert, Klijn, & Koppenjan, 1997; Meier & O'Toole, 2003), but explicit attention on the sectoral, domain and organizational boundaries is relatively new (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a; Williams, 2002).

In this literature politicians are the forgotten boundary spanners, while much of the empirical focus is on boundary-spanning roles and activities of public managers. In this article, we have considered how politicians work as boundary spanners. Specifically, we have examined their boundary-spanning work at the interface between collaborative governance and policy-making in representative democracy. We drew valuable data from a novel Qualitative Governance Case Database which contains detailed reports of 40 cases of collaborative governance; 28 of these cases were relevant for our study to investigate the various activities politicians undertake as boundary spanners working across arenas of collaborative governance and institutions of representative democracy. Moreover, we also investigated which type of political boundary spanning led to policy alignment.

Our research (design) had some limitations. The database of cases consists of 40 'rich cases' from various countries, policy domains and government levels but is at the same time not representative for all those countries, domains and levels. It is therefore difficult to arrive at theoretical generalization. We therefore aim for analytical generalization and for providing first insights in this relative unexplored field of research. Notwithstanding, this research offers a number of important contributions that can inform future research in the field of political boundary spanning.

First, we developed the concepts hands-on and hands-off political boundary spanning to distinguish between the work that politicians do when seeking to connect collaborative governance arenas and institutions of representative government. In hands-off boundary spanning, politicians take a more distant role to collaborative governance arenas by setting structures, frameworks and goals and activating others (for example, public managers) to actually perform on the ground boundary spanning. This type of political boundary spanning can be compared with the role of bridger (van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018a) in which boundary spanners are not heavily involved in the connecting process but set the conditions, resources and frameworks to stimulate activities across boundaries. Politicians may be reluctant to get heavily involved in the collaborative governance processes for several reasons; for example, they may not wish to display too much commitment to these processes and corresponding policy content, or they may wish to leave enough 'wiggle room' so they can ignore unpalatable outputs emerging from the collaborative arenas.

Second, our analysis of 28 empirical cases finds that in cases where politicians perform only hands-off political boundary spanning, there is very limited policy alignment between the collaborative governance arena and policy-making in representative democracy. The

boundary-spanning activities are too general and superficial and take place at too great a distance from the actual collaborative governance process leading in the end to misalignment. Moreover, we found that hands-off political boundary spanning only takes place at the beginning of the collaborative governance process and fades out during the process when content is developed and proposals for policymaking materialize.

Third, this research study finds that in practice hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning is typically combined. The hands-on boundary-spanning activities are also diverse, indicating various ways of participation in the collaborative governance process and brokering activities between governance arenas and institutions of representative democracy. A combination of hands-off and hands-on political boundary spanning makes sure that designs, structures and arrangements for interfacing collaborative governance and governmental policymaking stay active and get energized each time by specific on the ground boundary-spanning activities. All these activities are not performed by politicians alone but typically in interaction with other public and political officials.

A fourth conclusion from this study is that this combination of Hands-off and hands-off boundary spanning seems to lead to better policy alignment. It makes sure that boundary spanning is formalized to some extent and activated again and again during the course of the collaborative governance process, where politicians report back to relevant political committees and executive boards, which in turn mutually influences the policy development within the collaborative arena through participation and endorses policymaking in municipal council.

These insights allow us to cautiously formulate a tentative proposition to be researched in future studies. We propose that policy alignment calls for the active involvement of politicians as boundary spanners performing hands-off (for example, setting goals, agendas and frameworks for collaborative governance) as well as hands-on activities (such as actual participation in collaborative governance and brokering the relationship between collaborative processes and political decision-making). Hands-off backing of funding that incentivizes the collaborative governance arenas appears to be of key importance.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Appendix

**Appendix 1.** Cases of hands-off political boundary spanning were operationalized, as cases were politicians do not participate or lead on the collaborative governance arena but hold to account and/or influence at distance. In this table, we summarize the descriptions of these cases in the database along six dimensions.

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, location, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative arena	Who are the leaders of collaborative governance – and do they perform political boundary spanning?	Degree and quality of political boundary spanning between collaboration and representative democracy	Policy alignment between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
Case 1: Food labelling policy	National, Australia, Public Health	Yes, this was a motivation, but the goal was not met	Collaboration composed of politicians, public servants, and private for-profit and not for-profit stakeholders	Small team of civil servants who perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Government initiated, but ends up making its own policy and ignores the output of the collaboration	Weak policy alignment, competing policy making
Case 5: Container deposit legislation NSW	Regional, Australia, Environment and Climate	Yes, but the goal was not met	Stakeholder reference group	University professor commissioned by Minister performs internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Government initiated, held to account and then formed an alliance with one of the stakeholders and ignored the policy produced by the collaboration	Weak policy alignment, competing policy making
Case 6: Blackfoot watershed challenge	Local, USA, Agriculture, economy & trade, environment & Climate	Yes, and the goal was met	Informal collaboration formed bottom up	Team: Public manager, private for-profit actor, and a citizen perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Politicians held collaboration to account, did not exert influence but provided funding	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy making
Case 7: Desert Tortoise Habitat Conservation	Local, regional national, USA, Environment and climate	No, but it was indeed the result	Stakeholder collaboration involving politicians, civil servants, private for-profit and not for-profit actors and citizens	Civil servant, a private non-profit organization, and a hired consultant perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Government initiated and provided financial support, did little to influence	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy-making

(Continued)



## Appendix 1. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, location, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative arena	Who are the leaders of collaborative governance – and do they perform political boundary spanning?	Degree and quality of political boundary spanning between collaboration and representative democracy	Policy alignment between policy agencies, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
Case 8: Counter terrorism	National, Netherlands, Public Health, security and safety	Yes, and the goal was met	Committee of agencies collaborating to instigate terrorism measures composed of public servants	Public servants in lead agencies perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Initiated by ministerial decree, politicians held to account and exerted influence, collaboration suffered from severe budget cuts, and its policies were not adopted by politicians	Weak policy alignment, competing policy making
Case 13: Reduction of Family Violence	Regional, Australia, Victoria, Social/employment policy, criminal justice, policing and human services	Yes, and the goal was met	Collaborative cross-departmental steering committee between Human services and department of justice and private non-profit service providers	Team: Police commissioner and assistant police commissioner assisted by non-profit private actor perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	The government held to account and exerted influence, and received some funding	Moderate policy alignment, division of labor between the two policy arenas
20: Rhode Island's Salt Ponds	Local, regional, USA, environment & climate	Yes and the goal was met	Research partnership between a public agency Council and the local university	Team: Civil servants and private non-profit stakeholders perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Politicians provided funding and held to account, and exerted considerable influence. The collaborator but suffered from cuts in staff	Moderate policy alignment, division of labor between the two policy arenas
24: Foodborne disease outbreak	Local, Germany, health, economy and trade, food	Yes and the goal was met	Cross agency crisis management task force	Civil servants performs internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Politicians put pressure on collaboration to come up with a crisis solution – they endorsed the solution but returned to status quo when the crisis was over	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy making

(Continued)

## Appendix 1. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: level, location, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative arena	Who are the leaders of collaborative governance – and do they perform political boundary spanning?	Degree and quality of political boundary spanning between collaboration and representative democracy	Policy alignment between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
Case 25. Infant mortality	National, USA Public Health	To some degree, and this goal was met	Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Networks	Team: Civil servant and private non-profit act performs internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Government initiated, held collaboration to account, exerted very limited influence but provided some funding	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy making
Case 26. Living Lab Stratum-seind	Regional, Netherlands, Culture/leisure, security & public safety	To some degree, and the goal was met	Collaboration between public agencies and private for-profit and non-profit actors	Team: Civil servants perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Initiated by university Mayor mobilized key stakeholders, politicians held collaboration to account and exerted marginal influence on policy	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy making
Case 32. Revitalization of Central Dandenong	Local, regional, multi-level, Australasia, Education, Infrastructure & planning, social and employment	To some degree, and the goal was met	Informal networks between civil servants, and private non-profit and for-profit stakeholders	Team: Civil servants from different levels of government and some stakeholders perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Government initiated, held to account, exerted some influence on policy, and provided dwindling funding	Moderate policy alignment, division of labor between the two policy arenas
Case 35. Aquaculture Partnership	Local, regional, North America, agriculture	To some degree, and the goal was met to some degree	Formal government commissioned partnership composed of appointed civil servants, private for-profit actors and citizens	Team: Civil servant and private for-profit actors perform internal boundary spanning in collaboration	Initiated by law and politicians held collaboration to account but did not influence	Weak policy alignment, delegated collaborative policy making



**Appendix 2.** Cases of combined hands-on and hands-off political boundary-spanning Cases where politicians participate and lead on the collaborative arena and hold to account and/or influence at distance were defined as cases of combined hands-on and hands-off political boundary spanning. In the database, there were no cases of *hands-on* political boundary spanning only. In the table below, we summarize the descriptions of these cases in the database along six dimensions.

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
3: Peri-urban development	Local, regional, Netherlands, Culture & leisure, education, environment & climate, infrastructure & planning, Highly political sensitive (farming versus leasure)	Yes, and the goal was met	Broekpolder federation – convened by citizens – aiming to co-create plan between private for-profit and non-profit stakeholders, citizens, and municipal politicians and administration	Leading politicians and a few others participated in the beginning but less so later on	Leader of citizen organization, Alderman, and leading civil servant – the latter with shifting intensity	The Mayor and Alderman failed to involve, engage and commit the municipal council, which made the interaction between the two arenas very sensitive to shifts in political leadership in the wake of elections, politicians stopped holding to account and seeking influence. Politicians supported the collaboration in the beginning but not in the end	Weak alignment, of policy making, competing policy making

(Continued)

Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
4: Collaborative policy-making in representative democracy	Local, Denmark, youth policy Low political sensitivity	Yes, and the goal was met	Political committee consisting of five politicians and ten youth convened/commissioned by municipal council to develop a proposal for a youth policy	A carefully selected number of politicians was formally assigned to participate and did participate in practice	The municipal council formally appointed a politician to lead the committee assisted by civil servants	The participating politicians reported back to relevant political committees (held to account), and influenced the policy through participation and the final endorsement of the policy in municipal council. The policy proposal was not related to party politics. The politicians supported the collaboration from beginning to end.	Moderate policy alignment, delegated

(Continued)



## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
9: Community Enterprise Het Klokhuis	Local, Netherlands, Public Health, Social & Employment, Proposed closedown of community center High political sensitivity, driver was to avoid addiction facility	No, and had no such effect	Community building project initiated by citizens and involving citizens and the municipality	The Alderman participated, and there were also some informal contacts between individual politicians and members of the collaboration	The Alderman, the city manager and some of the initiators	The Alderman (and the city manager) performed strong political boundary spanning promoting political support overcoming resistance from a city council that held to account and exerted influence, to secure funding and autonomy form. The strategy was to restrict political influence to the formulation of political conditions for the collaboration (political gatekeeper). Politicians supported the collaboration form beginning to end.	Moderate alignment of policy making, division of labor/ authority between the two arenas

(Continued)



Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
10: Community Enterprise De meevaart	Local, Netherlands, Culture & leisure, Public Health, Social & employment, improvement of neighborhood cohesion	No, and had no such effect	Community building enterprise initiated in collaboration between politicians, critical servants, private for profit and non-profit actors and citizens	There were informal contacts between individual politicians and members of the collaboration	Team: Politicians, civil servants and citizens	Allocated extensive funding and buildings, administrative assistance, formulating guidelines, and politicians formed informal relationships based on reciprocity in terms of exchange of ideas and influence. The politicians supported the collaboration form beginning to end.	Strong alignment of policy making, two-directional integration

(Continued)



## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
15: Area C: Milan, congestion reduction strategy	Local, Italy, Environment & climate, Infrastructure & planning, Technology & transport, Italy, reduction of congestion, medium political sensitivity	Yes, and the goal was met	Government initiated participatory process involving all relevant and affected public and private actors and citizens in developing a strategy for regulating traffic in a part of Milan	Politicians were mostly involved at the early stages – initiation – but not later where the task was left to civil servant agencies and silos, private for-profit, and non-profit actors and citizen	The alderman and Mayor and a team of civil servants at different levels	At intervals, civil servants communicated political input from politicians to the collaboration (influence), and the collaboration accounted for its progression to leading politicians along the way. The Alderman secured funding and allowed for experimentation, and the Mayor secured strong political support. The politicians supported the collaboration form beginning to end.	Strong aligning of policy making, two directional integration

(Continued)

Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
18: Delaware Inland Bays	Local, USA, Environment & Climate, improvement of water quality, highly politically sensitive	Yes, a goal that was only marginally met	Collaboration aiming to fight low water quality involving a wide range of public actors as well as private for-profit and non-profit actors and citizens	Politicians were somewhat involved in all phases of the collaboration	Formal executive council composed of civil servants that is transformed into a implementation committee of civil servants (a leading politician gets involved in the end) seconded by an advisory committee of citizens	Politicians were strongly involved in agenda setting, and influenced and monitored the policy making process but did nothing to promote interaction and ties between the two policy making arenas. The politicians' support for the collaboration was lukewarm in all stages.	Weak alignment of policy making, competing policies

(Continued)



## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
21: Lake Tahoe	Local, regional, USA, Environment & climate, lake restoration, highly politically sensitive	Not at first but more so later. The goal was partially reached	Regional stakeholder board composed of local and regional public authorities, private stakeholders and citizens, initiated by national law	Politicians were not involved in the beginning but somewhat participated later on	Collective leadership with stakeholders as key players	Politicians pass regulation and set up goals, held collaboration a bit to account and did little to align interests and exert influence. The politicians' support for the collaboration was lukewarm in all stages.	Weak alignment of policy making, delegation

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Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
22: Tampa Bay	Local, regional, USA, Environment & climate, low political sensitivity	Yes, and goal was partially met	Partnership prescribed in national law assigned to manage water quality and water use in Tampa Bay estuary, composed of local and regional agencies, and private non-profit actors (citizens were involve in initiation but not later)	Politicians were not involved in the beginning, but got somewhat involved later on	A few politicians and civil servants performed leadership in a policy board	Politicians were influencing and closely monitoring the collaboration, mainly one directional.	Weak alignment of policy making, cooptation of policy implementation
						The politicians' support for the collaboration increased over the period	

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
23: Tillamook Bay * very old case	Local, USA, Environment & climate	Yes, to some extent and met this goal	Within the framework of a national program the collaboration set out to make a plan for improving the water quality in the bay, Participants were civil servants and agencies and private non-profit organizations	Politicians participated a little in the middle of the period	Federal, state and local politicians held seats in a policy committee but day-to-day leadership was performed by a management committee composed of stakeholders; Leadership was lacking and a group of community leaders performed informal leadership	Politicians served mostly to hold the collaboration to account. The politicians' support shifted up and down over time.	Weak alignment of policy making; Delegation

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
28: Combating illiteracy, City	Local, Netherlands, Education, Social & Employment, Low political sensitivity	Only little, but had to some extent that affect	Local network formed in the wake of a national program and grant scheme established by a private non-profit fund and government; the collaboration involved municipal public officials and agencies and volunteers	Politicians were involved in the collaboration	There was uncertainty regarding the distribution of leadership obligations between the Alderman and civil servants on the one side and private non-profit organizations on the other	Politicians (the Alderman) provided funding allocated by the national program (WOO) but mainly communicated with the collaboration around issues related to the allocation of resources and holding it to account for its spending. Politicians supported the collaboration in all phases	Weak alignment of policy making, delegation

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
29: Combatting illiteracy, City B	Local, Netherlands, Education, Social & Employment, Low political sensitivity	Not so much, but did meet such goals to some extent	Local network revitalized in the wake of a national program and grant scheme established by a private non-profit fund and government; composed of municipal and regional agencies and as newcomers public officials and voluntary organizations	Alderman played a key role as initiator (on request from municipal council)	Alderman, civil servants and private non-profit organizations, the collaboration received considerable support from politicians	Politicians (the Alderman) provided funding allocated by the national program (WOO). The Alderman kept illiteracy on the political agenda in the city council, and the council developed an illiteracy. Politicians supported the collaboration in all phases	Moderate to strong alignment of policy making – but there were different views regarding what would be a realistic policy goal

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Appendix 2. (Continued).

	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Context: Level, place, policy area	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
30: Combatting illiteracy, City C	Yes, but failed to do so.	Local, Netherlands, education, social & Employment, Low political sensitivity	Local network revitalized in the wake of a national program and grant scheme established by a private non-profit fund and government; composed of municipal and regional agencies and as newcomers public officials and voluntary organizations	Politicians participated but not clear how	Leadership was performed by Alderman, and municipal civil servants and private non-profit organizations: The leadership performed by the municipality was perceived and mainly consisted in organizing occasional meetings. Medium support from politicians.	The alderman hosted meetings, held to account although the assessment criteria were vague allocated funding. The politicians' support for the collaboration was lukewarm in all phases.	Weak alignment of policy making, delegation

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
33:Carolyn Elite-Citizen Collaborations in NSW Parliament's Energy Inquiry	State (Regional), Australia, the collaboration took part in a government parliamentary committee on the topic of energy policy. At the time this was an issue of relatively high sensitivity due rising electricity prices for voter	The two citizens juries were intended to build broad public legitimacy among citizens (but not interest groups and energy sector stakeholders). This goal was not achieved because the citizen engagement process was very low profile.	Two citizens forums embedded in an inquiry of a parliamentary committee	One politician (the Chair of the Parliamentary committee) instigated and led the citizen engagement processes (citizen's juries) The involvement of the other politicians were relatively passive; some went to observe the citizens deliberations. All engaged with the citizens when they hand over their recommendations	A politician (the chair of the parliamentary committee) instigated, championed and led the citizens engagement process	In this case boundary spanning occurred in so far as one politician led the process and acted as a bridge, or translator between citizens engagement and the formal requirements of the parliamentary committee. Here there is a close overlap between collaborative leadership and boundary spanning	Moderate. The citizens' collaborations were embedded in an inquiry of a parliamentary committee. There was relatively good alignment between the citizens' process and the parliamentary committee. However the formal response from the Government was relatively dismissive of the citizens' inputs. In other words there was limited boundary spanning across to the executive.

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents)	To what extent and how did politicians perform political and representative democracy	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	Participation of politicians	Character of collaborative policy arena	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among constituencies? Was this goal met?	Context: Level, place, policy area	Name of case and number in the data base
Moderate. Though the aim was to affect decision-making and policy-development and though a large number of political decisions were made in line with suggestions developed through collaborative processes, the overall alignment was quite moderate. Either the suggestions developed in the collaborative processes were adjusted to an already existing policy agenda or they were quite operative with limited general policy relevance	Passive rather than active boundary spanning. Quite deliberately, politicians stayed away from ongoing dialogues. When trying to participate, they were blamed for 'politicizing' dialogues. However, they were regularly reported to and responsible for decisions initiated through the collaboration. The political support for the process declined over the years.	The leadership of collaborative: district level senior civil servants Strategic leadership: central and local politicians together with civil servants	Politicians were involved at two levels: At the central politicians were important for the initiation of the program. At the district-level, politicians had a quite important role for designing the collaborative procedure.	Local government-established framework for voluntary and self-selected collaboration between different strands of local government and with citizens at the neighborhood level in nine districts.	Yes. The aim was fairly well achieved in the early stages of the process, but decreased over time.	Local, Sweden, Culture/Leisure Security and public safety Social/Employment Segregation	36: Neighbourhood Renewal, Stockholm

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## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
37: Policy-making committees, Svelvik	Local, Norway, Culture & leisure, Infrastructure & planning, community building, Highly politically sensitive	Yes, this was the main goal, and the goal was met.	Government initiated policy making committee composed of politicians and relevant and affected stakeholders and citizens developing a proposal for a community center	Politicians participated in the committees but tended to listen more than talk	A formally assigned politician planned and hosted meetings assisted by a consultant or civil servant.	The politicians did little to strengthen the exchange of ideas and policy plans between the collaboration and the political sentiments in the city council and the result was policy collision. Politicians started out supporting the collaboration but stopped to do so in the end.	Weak alignment of policy making, conflicting policy making

(Continued)

## Appendix 2. (Continued).

Name of case and number in the data base	Context: Level, place, policy area	Was one of the goals to strengthen the support for and legitimacy of the policy among affected constituencies? Was this goal met?	Character of collaborative policy arena	Participation of politicians	Who performed leadership of the collaboration?	To what extent and how did politicians perform political boundary spanning?	Degree of alignment of policy making (agendas, processes and contents) between policy agendas, processes and output of collaborative policy arena and representative democracy
40: Mitigating climate change	National, Netherlands, Agriculture, Environment & climate, youth policy,	Yes, and this goal was met.	Government initiated formal collaboration 'National Agreement on Climate' composed of public, private for-profit and non-profit actors and other societal actors	Politicians only participated in the very end	Politicians performed leadership by defining the overall policy goals, convening the actors and endorsing it policy output; civil servants performed day-to-day leadership	Until the very end when the collaboration presented its policy proposal to the public there were very little or no interaction between the two arenas and there were few opportunities to hold the collaboration to account or influence its policy making	Weak alignment of policy-making, delegation