

Paper proposal submitted for the **FoJuS Jahrestagung 2021**, the 14th Annual Conference of the Postgraduate researchers' network for policy analysis and public administration, Panel 2 **Digitalisation & Collaboration (TROPICO-Panel)**, Universität Potsdam (Virtual event), 25–26 February 2021

Title of the paper: Citizens and the legitimacy outcomes of collaborative governance

Abstract: Is collaborative governance “democracy-enhancing” and does it generate legitimacy? This theoretical paper studies how the institutional design of collaborative governance impacts on the legitimacy citizens grant the state and the bureaucracy. Drawing from the literatures on administrative burden and policy feedbacks and a positive approach to legitimacy, a two-step explanation is derived: first, collaborative governance’s specific institutional features shape citizens’ experiences in a way that alleviates the psychological, learning and compliance costs of state-citizens interactions; second, these experiences generate cues that feed back into citizens’ assessments of the legitimacy of the state and the bureaucracy through three main mechanisms: the interpretive mechanism based on the definition of the target population, the visibility-of-state-action mechanism and the collaborative-process-based interpretive mechanism. This paper invites scholars and practitioners engaged in collaborative governance to reflect not only on the direct consequences of this type of decision-making instruments but also to their broader outcomes in terms of citizens’ assessments of the legitimacy of the bureaucracy and the state.

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