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# Collaborative public administration

## Some lessons from the Israeli experience

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**Abstract** *Public administration is incrementally moving on a reform track that leads from responsiveness to collaboration. Attempts to enrich the discussion on the current state of new managerialism in public administration and to explain why and how it makes progress towards higher levels of cooperation and collaboration with various social players such as the private sector, the third sector, and citizens. Argues that in the end this is a socially desirable trend with meaningful benefits that reach far beyond the important idea of responsiveness. The idea of “collaborative” administration thus challenges “responsive” public administration. Maintains that the collaborative model, whether bureaucracy-driven, citizen-driven, or private-sector-driven, is realistic and beneficial even if it cannot be fully applied. Goes on to describe two major experiences from the Israeli arena. Finally, summarizes the theoretical and practical experiences that can be learned from these ventures and elaborates on the future of collaboration in modern public administration.*

### Introduction

The increasing interest in the idea of new public management (NPM) has put serious pressure on state bureaucracies to become more responsive to citizens as clients. In many respects NPM has become the “religion” and responsiveness the “law”. However, recently bureaucracies have also been urged/forced to advance beyond responsiveness and engage in collaboration with other social players such as private businesses and third-sector organizations as well as citizens. Without doubt, these are important advances in contemporary public administration, which finds itself struggling in an ultra-dynamic marketplace arena. Some may even define the shift toward collaboration as an additional “law” in the “religion” of NPM. Like any other call for reform it was built on a necessary change in the minds and hearts of the parties involved. In order to bring collaboration into the central halls of public administration, many old perceptions and attitudes need to be revised and reframed.

Despite its evident advantages the idea of collaboration also attracts heavy fire from those who believe that it is merely a utopian idea with minimal impact on the administrative process. At most, opponents suggest that collaboration is a welcome change in theory building and in practical culture reconstruction, but they add that modern societies still encounter an increase in citizens’ passivism; they tend to favor the easy chair of the customer over the sweat and turmoil of participatory involvement.



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Thus, the opponents conclude, collaboration remains a utopian idea with only minimal impact on the nature of modern administration and its activities.

This essay has two primary goals: the first is to enrich the discussion on the current state of new managerialism in public administration and to criticize it for obscuring the significance of citizen action and participation through overstressing the (important) idea of responsiveness. In light of this criticism the second goal is to propose an alternative to “responsive” public administration and to challenge it with the idea of “collaborative” administration. I argue that the collaborative model, whether bureaucracy-driven, citizen-driven or private-sector-driven, is realistic and beneficial even if it cannot be fully applied. To prove successful it must, however, rely on the intensive participation and involvement of various social players and on their collaboration with governance and public administration agencies (G&PA).

The paper goes on to describe two major experiences from the Israeli arena. The first is a practical collaboration project with citizens regarding an extensive construction program. This is the development of a strategic “green area” on top of Mount Carmel. The legal owner of this area is the Christian Carmelite order who has suggested a detailed plan for construction and development. The plan has gained significant recognition in the Israeli arena as an exemplary model for collaboration in local government administration and urban planning and is now studied for implementation in other projects. The second experience is more academic in nature and attempts to induce higher public involvement and participation by conducting sequential nation-wide public surveys to learn about local and central government performance and responsibility towards citizens. This project, titled the National Assessment Project of Public Administration – Israel (NAPPA-IL), has been on track since late 1998 and is growing in scale and range.

This paper presents both the theoretical rationale and practical experience of these projects. Their lessons may be used to advance our knowledge on patterns of collaboration in and around the public sector. Moreover, I believe that these experiences illustrate how the confidence of and collaboration with citizens are built despite serious limitations and obstacles typical of the nature of bureaucracies. However, the paper also concludes that despite citizens being formal “owners” of the state, ownership will remain a symbolic banner for the relationship between G&PA, citizens and the private sector in a representative democracy due to various centrifugal forces such as citizens’ passivism or businesses self-interests. A more realistic scenario for the years ahead is that G&PA and other social players will continuously tango between two interaction types: the demand for responsiveness and the utopia of optimal collaboration.

### **From responsiveness to collaboration**

Responsiveness to citizens as clients has evolved as the main theme of new public management reforms in the last decade. In a previous study (Vigoda, 2000) I mentioned two major approaches toward responsiveness. The first treats it at best as a necessary evil that appears to compromise professional effectiveness, and at worst as a sign of political expediency if not outright corruption (Rourke, 1992). According to this line of research, responsiveness damages professionalism since it forces public servants to satisfy citizens even when such actions contradict the collective public interest. However, the conventional perspective of NPM suggests that democracy and

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bureaucracy would seem to require administrators who are responsive to the popular will, at least through legislatures and politicians if not directly to the people (Stivers, 1994; Stewart and Ranson, 1994). A responsive politician or bureaucrat must be reactive, sympathetic, sensitive, and capable of feeling the public's needs and opinions.

According to Thomas and Palfrey (1996) responsiveness of public administration to citizens' demands may be defined as the speed and accuracy with which a service provider replies to a request for action or for information. Speed refers to the waiting time between a citizen's request for action and the reply by the public agency. Accuracy means the extent to which the provider's response is appropriate to the needs or wishes of the service user. Speed is relatively a simple factor to measure, accuracy more complex. Contrary to the private sector, accuracy in a modern public sector also implies a continuous search for fairness, equity, and high standards of welfare. As suggested by Rhodes (1987) and Palfrey *et al.* (1992) these criteria represent values which are additional to efficiency, effectiveness, and service that characterise market-driven processes.

To increase responsiveness in public administration organizations it is essential to evaluate constantly the perceptions of citizens-clients toward various service providers (Vigoda, 2000). However, responsiveness cannot be maintained unless these perceptions match the expectations and perceptions of public administrators well in all levels. The idea of having a certain level of fit between what clients expect and what public officials are ready, willing, or able to deliver is crucial. Vroom (1964) emphasized the meaning and importance of expectations inside the workplace. He argued that meeting employees' and managers' expectations is essential for achieving proper individual outcomes and general organizational performance. In many ways, the theory of expectations may be transferable to the complex relationships between service providers and citizens as consumers. Supporters of the cognitive discipline (e.g. Lewin, 1936) have long argued that perceptions of reality, and not reality itself, determines people's behavior and attitudes to other individuals and to the environment. Accordingly, the citizens' view of the public service depends on their interpretation of reality and not on public administration actions *per se*. Likewise, responsiveness is by no means measured in absolute figures. The "sense of responsiveness" counts differently in various administrative cultures and consequently should be treated as a relative rather than an absolute measure. Furthermore, as with responsiveness, relative measures may also be applicable to other important properties of public administration activity, such as responsibility, accountability, fairness, or equity. For example, waiting five minutes on the phone for a response from a public servant may seem reasonable to a British citizen. However, it may be perceived as less reasonable by an American citizen, and may appear totally unreasonable to an Israeli citizen.

In line with this, a comparative-relative approach, based on cross-cultural understanding, must be considered if one seeks a reliable evaluation of modern public administration. As will be explained below, a preliminary platform for such a specific initiative exists and is being examined in the Israeli sphere. Moreover, beyond its interesting comparative merit, this approach of continuous responsiveness evaluation also has meaning for the advancement of collaborative ventures among public administrators, policy makers, business firms, and citizens as individuals, groups, or active members of third-sector organizations. Responsiveness may be seen as an

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additional step toward higher levels of collaboration in public administration. The wider context and importance of such collaboration is discussed next.

### **Collaboration in public administration: bureaucracy-driven models versus citizen-driven models**

Recent criticism of the responsiveness-oriented thinking of new public management has called for a theoretical and practical shift towards increased collaboration in and around public administration (Vigoda, 2002a). According to this criticism, NPM breeds passivism among citizens as clients by overstating the idea of responsiveness. Placing the citizen-client at the center sends a covert social message to the people saying, "Make your wish . . . it is our goal to serve you"; yet it adds, "But please don't bother us . . . leave the professional work to us". In other words, NPM and the ethos of responsiveness put citizens as clients in the center by asking them about their needs and demands. But similarly they ask citizens to keep their distance from the administrative work and the decision-making centers. The covert message is, "Bureaucracy needs to work for you so keep away". Through this message modern public administration wins the battle for responsiveness but does not even try to fight the battle for collaboration with the people.

It seems to me essential to induce an intensive turn towards collaboration in the public sector. In many respects such a move bears all the typical symptoms of an additional administrative reform, one directed at the minds and hearts of policy makers, policy implementers, and other social players such as private entrepreneurs, third-sector organizations, and citizens in general. Doing (good) administrative work for the public also means doing it with the public, as well as with all those who are concerned with the formation of modern/prosperous societies. Hence, despite some serious obstacles and difficulties, the idea of a "collaborative public administration" may be defined as reform in progress. It is reform that has the potential of revising our old conventional view of government by making government and public administration more willing to share ideas, knowledge, and power with others. While theory is equivocal when dealing with various recommended models of reform in public administration, there are still two major types for such reforms:

- (1) Bureaucracy-driven models.
- (2) Citizen-driven or grass-roots-driven models.

Both of these models suggest an infusion of change in the public sector, each from a different starting point. Bureaucracy-driven models view G&PA as those who are responsible for the initiation of change and for making it work properly. Grass-roots-driven models on the other hand make more demands of the people, expecting that they, instead of G&PA, will make the first move towards reform. This models demonstrate how various reforms became successful when starting from urgent needs of individuals and groups, or from the spontaneous collective support for an original street-level leader. Naturally, there is no ideal model of integrating both of these approaches in policy planning cycles, but there may be an ideal type model of a collaborative reform. In the following sections I elaborate on two Israeli experiences that heavily rely on the above models and represent the promising idea of collaboration in and around the public sector.

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**The Israeli experience: fostering collaboration in two projects**

I decided to focus on two examples that are substantially different but that denote some of the potential of collaborative innovation on the local government and on the national government level. Despite the differences, these projects still illustrate how both a bureaucracy-driven model and a grass-roots-driven model may eventually contribute to the development of a collaborative culture in a modern state.

*I – public involvement process in local government: the Carmelite project*

The idea of urging higher and more intensive involvement by citizens has taken an interesting course in the Carmelite project as planned in the city of Haifa. Originally this project was similar to many other local government/ urban development programs in the sense that all of them were private ventures asking for the approval of the city authorities. Like other plans, the Carmelite project was suggested by private entrepreneurs and by the owners of a piece of land on the top of Mount Carmel in the city of Haifa. This area with its breathtaking view, which for many years was held by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for military reasons of air control, was released and returned to its original owners in the mid-1990s. The legal owners, namely the Catholic Church and the Christian Carmelite Order, resolved to develop the area and suggested a comprehensive plan targeted at building commercial centers, hotels, residential neighborhoods, as well as gardens and green areas, and they sought the formal approval of the city authorities. In an exceptional decision, supported by professionals and academics, the mayor of Haifa appointed a 12-member committee whose task was to initiate a unique public involvement process intended to probe residents' opinions of the project. Moreover, the committee was authorized to suggest changes in the plan in keeping with the opinions of citizens and professionals. The entrepreneurs had to agree to this condition in order to move ahead with the formal request for approval by the city authorities. In any case, the entire public involvement process was designed to be activated and completed prior to the discussion in the regional Planning and Building Committee, whose duty is to examine and approve or reject formally such plans. Note, however, that the public involvement process did not intend to replace or adversely affect the right of vested opposition by the public as enforced by the Israeli planning and building law (Gilboa and Plaut, 2001, p. 7). Thus, the process was aimed at bringing citizens and city residents closer to decision-making centers on the local community level, providing them with the opportunity of an organized voice, and stimulating a collaborative process among private, public, and third-sector organizations as well as individual citizens.

As noted, the committee consisted of 12 members who directed, supervised, and accompanied the public involvement process. Of these members five were municipality representatives from various relevant departments such as the city engineering branch, the mayor's office, and the ombudsman's branch; two represented the forum of environmental organizations, which are basically third-sector bodies; three were academic professionals in the field of urban planning; one was an independent architect; and one was a lawyer representing the entrepreneurs. In addition, two academic experts were involved in the active process of analyzing public opinion regarding the project. The committee worked for a year and submitted its recommendations to the mayor and the entrepreneurs, and also publicized the

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conclusions for the citizens of Haifa. All in all, the public involvement process included six major steps (Gilboa and Plaut, 2001, pp. 11-14):

- (1) *Preliminary briefing.* A step in which announcements were issued to inform to the public on the preparation of the Carmelite project and on the intended public involvement process. The announcements were advertised in several languages (principally Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian) in local and national newspapers and on local television and radio. The announcements were also distributed to neighborhood committees in areas located around the geographical borders of the Carmelite project. High school pupils assisted in this activity and did the rounds of placing the materials in residents' mailboxes. In addition, a detailed exhibition of the project was mounted in City Hall, with information on the public involvement process presented there and in some of the municipality's main departments. All the information was also available on a special Internet site created for this purpose.
- (2) *Presenting the project to the public.* Two public meetings were held to present the project to the public. An open invitation was distributed to all city and non-city residents, and some 450 people attended both meetings. At these gatherings the project was presented by the entrepreneurs and by city officials and feedback from the public was obtained and recorded. In addition, the public gained information on the involvement process, its rationale, and its goals.
- (3) *Feedback from the public.* Two major methods were applied to obtain feedback from the public. First, the comments, concerns, questions, and answers voiced during the meetings were recorded and summarized in a separate document. Second, a detailed questionnaire was distributed among all those present at the meetings. This questionnaire included two major sections, one referring to the Carmelite project itself and the other to the public involvement process, its strengths and weaknesses. It is important to mention that despite previous suggestion by the professionals, who were especially hired to conduct the public opinion survey, the committee chose to use a convenient sample of residents rather than a more extensive and representative sample. As a result, many residents who were unable to attend the meetings for various reasons obviously had no reasonable chance to make themselves heard. Finally, a total of 145 completed questionnaires were returned and analyzed. The participants were also asked to indicate if they were interested in further discussion of the project in smaller "discussion groups".
- (4) *Focus/discussion groups.* An additional phase of hearing the public voice was accomplished through five discussion groups. These forums were composed of independent interested citizens, about 25 in each group, around 100 in all, who had the chance to review the details of the projects, to ask questions, raise concerns, and suggest alternatives and emendation of various parts in the project. Note also that steps 3 and 4 were both managed by natural professionals and expenses were covered entirely by the entrepreneurs as well as monitored by the steering committee.
- (5) *A summary document of public opinions.* The entire public involvement process as well as the public attitudes, questions, and concerns, were summarized in a comprehensive paper. This summary was brought to the attention of the

entrepreneurs, who were asked to revise their suggestion in accordance with the recommendations. The summarizing document was also made public through the media and presented to the local Planning and Building Committee together with the revised Carmelite plan.

- (6) *Response by the entrepreneur – feedback to the public.* The entrepreneurs examined the possibilities of making changes and revisions in the project. They were also asked by the steering committee to present a document in which they would include comments and responses to the public concerns. This document was distributed to the public in ways similar to those described above.

Most importantly, this final step closes a circle in the process of public involvement and collaboration among public administration agencies, private entrepreneurs, citizens, and third-sector organizations. It depends on the idea that the revised Carmelite plan will better meet the expectations of the city residents as individuals, interest groups of private or non-profit citizens, and the entrepreneurs. The process and its results are also expected to reduce the natural resistance to change in city urban planning and development. Being a first experience in the Israeli environment this collaborative process is also expected to suggest a practical model and guidelines for future similar ventures and decisions on both the local and national government level.

## *II – NAPPA-IL*

A somehow different venture that strictly falls into the definition of a collaborative process in public administration is suggested by a new assessment project of the public sector titled the NAPPA-IL. This project is academic-driven, and contrary to the Carmelite project it may be categorized as a grass-roots model of collaboration. While the Carmelite project was adopted, launched, and controlled by a major branch of public administration (a local government authority), the current project was devised and operated almost solely by members of academia. It is, however, expected that with time, public administration agencies will identify the promise and advantages of such a process and share responsibilities in fostering its theoretical and applied impact.

What is the theoretical justification and practical meaning of NAPPA-IL? First, in Israel and in many other countries, there is a growing need systematically to study, evaluate, and analyze the activities and performance of public administration, and most importantly, to do so from the perspective of the service receivers. Beyond local, separate, and inconsistent evaluation innovations in various fields of the public sector (i.e. education, healthcare, welfare, security) there is no integrative platform today that provides a general perspective on public administration as one body. As a result, there is also no systematic accumulation of relevant knowledge, in Israel or abroad, that facilitates a comparative examination (over time, nations, or cultures) of progress in this sector. In addition to the promising theoretical advantages of this project, both nationally and internationally, the practical merit is even more profound. The option for public administration to look into its image and perception in the eyes of citizens may breed increasing collaboration with various social players, who will come forward with improvements and innovations. A comparative view, which can take an inter-professional or international course, will definitely urge bureaucracies to seek cooperation with partners and to accomplish higher levels of collaboration in order to improve performance and recognition in the eyes of citizens-customers. Such

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collaboration may be on a domestic or cross-national basis but it will undoubtedly work positively for citizens and societies of modern democracies.

Recent work by Vigoda (2002a) summarizes several cornerstones of such an approach. Originally, it was rooted in the comparative-relative theory of responsiveness, and is further developed here as a tool for enhanced collaboration in public administration. It consists of seven major parts: six of them are divided between two separate arenas of analysis while the additional closing part integrates the previous six. The first and most prominent arena of the project suggests a comprehensive attitudinal-behavioral analysis of the governance and public administration. The second arena is characterized by a technical-economic orientation and actually is more widespread in contemporary public administration (i.e. technical methods of ISO, economic and budgetary measures, etc.). Thus, a major section of the NAPPA-IL is the underdeveloped arena of attitudinal-behavioral analysis. However, a long-range goal of the NAPPA-IL intends to integrate the two arenas and layers of analysis into one inclusive report that can be used by several recipients:

- by politicians and public policy makers, who will gain continuous knowledge of the operation of the public service;
- by public administration officers, who will be able to use these evaluations for the purpose of advancing managerial aspects of the administrative work;
- by the public and the media to create a culture of accountability and transparency in G&PA agencies; and
- by professionals and academics, to advance the study, understanding, and knowledge on G&PA by a comparative-relative method.

Thus, the NAPPA-IL project consists of the following arenas and parts:

(1) *The attitudinal-behavioral arena:*

- Examining citizens' attitudes and feelings when consuming public services. This can be achieved by use of satisfaction measures indicating the outcomes of certain G&PA activities, as well as an assessment of trust and confidence in G&PA, the comprehension of public administration actions as fruitful, beneficial, fair, equally shared among a vast population, effective, fast, and responding well to public needs.
- Examining the attitudes and perceptions of other stakeholders who take part in the process of planning, producing, delivering, and evaluating public outcomes. These "others" include external private and not-for-profit firms, suppliers, manufacturers, constructors, etc.
- Comparing citizens attitudes (part 1) with the attitudes and perceptions of other stakeholders in the administrative process (part 2). Searching for the best fit between these behavioral constructs.

(2) *The technical-economical arena:*

- Determining effective measures and criteria for the outcomes of various public administration agencies. These measures and criteria need to be both absolute and relative and they need to be determined in advance within a strategic process of setting performance indicators (PIs) (Pollitt, 1988, 1990).



The process should involve all the concerned stakeholders. That is, the process will seek collaboration among various players in and around the particular public service.

- Examining objective public outcomes such as speed, quality, and accuracy. This examination needs to be done by professionals and on a continuous basis. It also needs to be revised and reexamined from time to time and recorded in an appropriate manner that will allow comparison and transparency to the public.
- Comparing the effective measures and criteria (part 1) with objective public outcomes (part 2). Such a comparison is even more effective and beneficial when conducted over time, populations, cultures, geographical areas, etc.
- Integrating the data of parts 1-3 of the attitudinal-behavioral arena and parts 1-3 of the technical-economical arena, and mainly parts 1 and 3 of the technical-economical arena, into a comprehensive report that is aimed at reflecting the current state and advance of public administration on both the attitudinal-behavioral dimension and the technical-economic one. The tasks of development, updating, and knowledge-sharing of this report as well as the lessons that can be learned from it are the primary goal of the NAPPA-IL.

### **The future of collaboration in public administration: mid-range summary and partial implications**

At first glance, collaboration of G&PA with other social stakeholders seems to contradict the essence of bureaucracy. The ideal type of bureaucracy, as set out by Max Weber, has clearly defined organizational characteristics that have remained relevant over the years. Nonetheless, while public organizations have undergone many changes in the last century they are still based on the Weberian legacy of clear hierarchical order, concentration of power among senior officials, formal structures with strict rules and regulations, limited channels of communication, confined openness to innovation and change, and non-compliance with the option of being replaceable (Golembiewski and Vigoda, 2000). These ideas seem to be substantially different from the nature of collaboration, which means negotiation, participation, cooperation, free and unlimited flow of information, innovation, agreements based on compromises and mutual understanding, and a more equal distribution and redistribution of power and resources. According to this analysis, which some may find quite utopian, collaboration is an indispensable part of democracy. It means partnership where authorities and state administrators accept the role of leaders who need to run citizen's lives better, not because they are more powerful or superior, but because this is a mission to which they are obligated. They must see themselves as committed to citizens who have agreed to be led or "governed" on condition that their lives continuously improve.

Hence, it seems odd to ask for genuine collaboration between those in power and those who delegated power. In many respects, growing citizenry involvement by interest groups, political parties, courts, and other democratic institutions as well as greater involvement by business firms and the private sector may only irritate politicians in office and state administrators. Too broad an involvement, in the eyes of elected politicians and appointed public officers, may be perceived as interfering with

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their administrative work. The freedom of public voice is thus limited and obscured by the need of administrators and politicians to govern. Consequently, the public lacks sufficient freedom of voice and influence. While mechanisms of direct democracy are designed to show such impediments the door, modern representative democracy lets them back in through the rear entrance. Representative democracy frequently diminishes the motives for partnership with governance. Constitutions, legislatures, federal and local structures as well as electoral institutions are in slow but significant decline in many western societies. They suffer from increasing alienation, distrust, and cynicism among citizens; they encourage passivism and raise barriers before original individual involvement in state affairs (Eisinger, 2000; Berman, 1997). Thus, as a counter-revolutionary course of action, a swelling current in contemporary public administration seeks to revitalize collaboration between citizens and administrative authorities through various strategies (Vigoda, 2002a).

In fact such trends are not so new. The need to foster certain levels of cooperation among political governmental institutions, professional agencies of public administration, citizens as individuals or groups, and the private sector has been mentioned before, and was advanced in several ways. Among these philosophies and strategies one should mainly consider:

- Greater cooperation with the third sector (Thompson *et al.*, 2000; Gidron *et al.*, 1992; Grubbs, 2000).
- Greater collaboration with the private sector and initiation of plans aimed at supporting communities through various services in the fields of internal security, transport, and education (Glaister, 1999; Collin, 1998; Schneider, 1999).
- Encouragement of state and local municipality initiatives that foster values of democratic education, participation, and involvement among citizens (e.g. the local democratic club established in Culver City, California: <http://www.culvercityonline.com/> accessed June 25, 2001). This pattern also coheres with the idea of a communitarian spirit that transfers some (but not all) responsibility for civic development from central government to local authorities in states and cities, as well as directly to individual citizens (Etzioni, 1994, 1995).
- Innovation by original citizenry involvement through not-for-profit civic organizations that help to establish a culture of participation and practice of voice (see the examples of “citizens conventions” in Denmark and Israel: <http://www.zippori.org.il/English/index.html> accessed June 25, 2001).

The future of collaboration in public administration is thus quite promising. I have stated elsewhere (Vigoda, 2002b) that during the last century modern societies accomplished remarkable achievements in different fields, many of them thanks to an advanced public sector. Yet at the dawn of the new millennium, various new social problems still await the consideration and attention of the state and its administrative system. To overcome these problems and create effective remedies for the new type of state ills there is a need to increase cooperation and collaboration and to share information and knowledge among all social parties. As shown in the present paper, there are a variety of models and opportunities for collaboration. Public administration carries major responsibility for making them work effectively and directing them well. The Carmelite project and the NAPPA-IL are only two examples, and others certainly exist across the globe. Together, they embody a new, vitalizing, and challenging field

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of action for a modern public sector. Nonetheless, we also agree that despite citizens being formal “owners” of the state they usually remain passive with regard to policy making and policy implementation. Thus, citizens’ ownership will remain a symbolic banner for the relationship between G&PA and other social players in a representative democracy. Modern governance and modern public administration will have continuously to battle powerful and centrifugal forces of citizens’ passivism, as well as economic and self-interested considerations of the private and third sectors. Hence, a more realistic approach suggests that collaboration can be better used by public administration but it may never be fully applied, for various reasons related to conflicting interests in modern representative democracies. The pragmatic scenario for the years ahead is that G&PA, citizens, and the private sector will continuously tango between two types of interaction: the demand for growing responsiveness and the utopia of optimal collaboration.

### **Concluding remarks**

Without doubt, we live in an era of great challenges for modern societies. The twenty-first century will necessitate enormous changes in our conventional perceptions of governmental activities and responsibilities. It will similarly require a reformation of the meaning of citizenship and a redefinition of the role of citizens, businesses and private sector firms, the third sector, the media, and academia. All these players, and others, will need to collaborate to some serious extent. Most importantly, they will need to collaborate with public administration as its impact grows, in order to provide the people with better services and with the high quality goods they deserve. They will have to collaborate since the economic, social, and human potential of “doing together” is much more extensive and profitable than the option of “doing alone”.

This paper has attempted to contribute to the understanding of collaboration and to point to its usefulness for public administration systems and for other players in the national arena. I have suggested that well-structured and comprehensive thinking on collaboration, combined with empirical evidence of its chances to endure and expand, is a momentous tool for policy makers, public administrators, managers, and citizens of the developed democracies. The core assumption, as developed here, is that independent activity by public administration, governments, and other social players is no longer sufficient for our complex societies. Instead, the interdisciplinary, integrative, and collaborative strategy may arise as the next promise for the years to come.

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