

How can city leaders promote public value through soft metagovernance?

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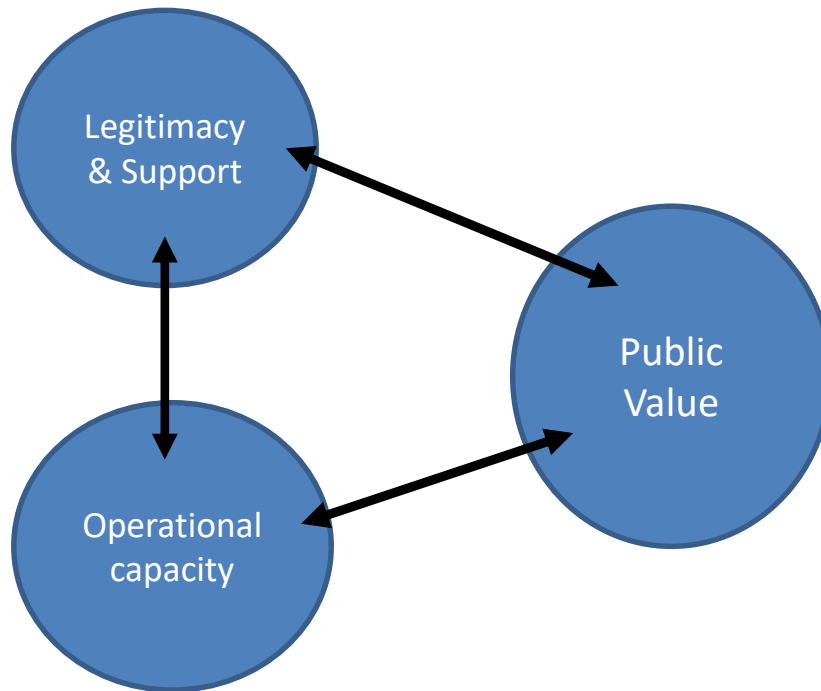
Soft metagovernance

- The aim of this article is to explore the opportunities and challenges of employing ‘soft’ metagovernance to promote public value in city networks.
- Soft metagovernance involves making an emotional connection with people through a collaborative endeavour (rather than employing bureaucratic hierarchy).

Public value

- Public value describes the value an organisation or network contributes to society.
- The term was originally coined by Mark Moore (1995) who saw it as providing public managers with a tool to contribute to the common good.
- Now, the concept is no longer limited to the lone public manager.
- Attention is often focused on creating public value through networking and collaboration.

Moore's strategic triangle



Examples of soft metagovernance across the strategic triangle

- The Public Value proposition
 - Founding members used soft metagovernance to create an innovative public value proposition.
 - But, informality led to confusion amongst partners about focus & direction.
 - The authorising environment
 - Soft metagovernance was used to selectively inform & empower critical actors & galvanise support in the city & beyond.
 - But, authorisation derived from high-trust, inter-personal relationships are vulnerable to changes in the formal institutional environment.
 - Operational capacity
 - Reflexive thinking energised junior staff with a new sense of ‘agency’.
 - But, leaders need to join up ‘informal intelligence’ to be effective.
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Conclusions

- This article provides new insights into how public value is (de)constructed as a consequence of soft metagovernance in city networks.
 - It has explored the informal activities of city leaders in the creation of public value.
 - Findings suggest that:
 - Relational leadership should not be viewed as a consequence of serendipity or chance.
 - A better understanding of how soft metagovernance functions can allow leaders to align their *soft* activities across the strategic triangle.
 - Aligning these soft activities more purposefully can maximise the potential to create public value & mitigate the risks of public value destruction.
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