Deil Wright’s Overlapping Model of Intergovernmental Relations: The Basis for Contemporary Intergovernmental Relationships

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In his first edition of *Understanding Intergovernmental Relations* published in 1978, Deil Wright provided three models of intergovernmental relations (IGR). Two of the models were very familiar to students of the field. The coordinate authority model depicted the clear separation between national and state/local relationships and the distinct boundaries separating the levels of government. The inclusive authority model, by contrast, presented a system in which intergovernmental relations were based on essentially a hierarchical set of relationships and emphasized the predominant role of the national level.

But it is the overlapping authority model—the third model that Wright presented in that book and its succeeding two editions—that was essentially a new way of depicting intergovernmental relationships. The Venn diagram that Wright used to describe intergovernmental relationships in this model presented IGR as a set of overlaps between national, state, and local units simultaneously. It also presented the relationships as ones in which autonomy and discretion in a single jurisdiction are constrained and, hence, the power and influence available to any one level is significantly limited (Wright 1988: 49). Wright emphasized the role of bargaining between actors in that model.

As one looks back on this model, it seems to lay the foundation for the developments of IGR since the third edition of that book was published in 1988. It provides the conceptual basis for moving beyond static views of IGR and federalism that pose the field as an either/or situation. It moves us to think about differences in relationships by program area, differences between states, and differences between state-local relationships. In fact, it seems much more consistent with the dynamism and complexity of the U.S. system of shared powers than either of the other two views.¹
This paper discusses a number of issues within the U.S. system that flow from the overlapping authority model. It reviews its influence on policy development, program relationships, and administrative practices. It indicates the ability of the model to reach beyond the three institutional levels and to include a range of third-party players beyond government, reflecting both the proliferation of public players as well as those that have emerged from various forms of contracting out. It discusses the ways that decision-making processes and theories have absorbed overlapping authority models. Two examples are provided of that influence. One indicates how behaviors are absorbed; network behaviors provide evidence of this. The second indicates how overlapping relationships are ignored; performance measurement is evidence of this. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the current state of intergovernmental management and possible directions for the future.

**Historical and Developmental Antecedents**

Wright made clear in his explication of the overlapping model of IGR that this protracted complex process moves beyond classic views of federalism. “IGR includes a range of activities and meanings that are neither explicit nor implicit in federalism” (Wright 1988: 37). These actions include complex multiunit interactions beyond nation-state relationships. These are actions which are non-hierarchical in nature and form a core concern for policy development. In this respect, while “not always recognized as such and certainly not denominated” (Graves 1963: 1), IGR as a process has developed in new ways.

First thought to be identified by William Anderson in the 1930s, Anderson crystalized it as IGR in his 1960 book, *Intergovernmental Relations in Review*. He linked legal issues to other relations, involving a host of jurisdictions—states, counties, towns, cities, villages, school districts,
or other local units—that had “legal existence, rights, functions, powers and duties within its territory, distinct from those of every other such unit” (1960: 3). At the same time, Morton Grodzins (1960: 265) introduced his well-known “marble cake” federalism imagery, describing the inseparable mingling of functions throughout the system, where sharing of functions goes far beyond the more visible grants-in-aid to include regulations and standards, sharing of expertise, and most importantly state and local responsibilities in the development of programs.

This perspective was documented around the same time in the historical patterns examined by Daniel Elazar (1962). Several cases were detailed where substantial public official interaction was needed to advance the practice of what he called cooperative federalism, designed to both maintain the federal balance while providing needed governmental services. Elazar concluded that, “In a sense, a substantial share of the history of American government has been a search for methods to provide for the necessary collaboration of the various units of the federal system while at the same time preserving and strengthening those units as separate bases for such collaboration” (305).

The most notable contemporary historian’s support for the overlapping authority model was a study of the early role of the federal government in Brian Balogh’s *A Government out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (2009). He demonstrated that the United States governed differently but less visibly than other developing bureaucratic states, noting that the United States had a national government that was capable of mobilizing comparable resources in the private and voluntary sectors. This often yielded more impressive results than the use of unilateral state power. Other than the postal system, few federal government functions penetrated deeply into the country because the vision of the early executive officials left
little room for powerful centralized administrative structures but left plenty of room for states and local governments to mingle public and private interests into mixed efforts.

The suspicions of the founding fathers to a traditional active and powerful centralized national government continued in federal efforts to avoid direct taxation, regulate individual behavior, or erect far-reaching hierarchical organizations to administer national programs. Meanwhile, the federal government was purchasing and distributing land, supporting infrastructure provision, and otherwise subventing funds to state and local governments. For Balogh the federal government role was defined as that of an “enabling state.”

In a similar vein, Samuel Beer had even earlier (1993) made a case for “national theory” that takes a broader view of the powers and responsibilities of the federal government and the states (21). In this sense, Beer draws on the ideas of Alexander Hamilton and Daniel Webster, who believed that part of the process of building a nation was employing the genius of diversity (391).

The evolution of a national system unfolded in the practice of IGR in four waves of emphasis that distinguish themselves as supportive of the overlapping model. While each feature existed from the beginning, at different periods their focus highlighted the underlying complexity and growth of the system (Agranoff 2012).

The first period of emphasis, law and politics, emerged with the building of the integral nation-state, primarily in the nineteenth century, when legal distinctions of government were initially defined. The most prominent feature was perhaps the dual federalism doctrine that held that the national government and the states each were sovereign in their respective spheres and that between them existed areas of activity into which neither could enter.

From the early twentieth century to roughly the 1960s, welfare state development and expansion ushered in the second phase. It marked a time of a growing and more professional
national government that also included a growing interdependency that linked subnational and state/federal governments (Skowronek 1982). In particular, the welfare state in the U.S. was very much a top-down effort, as was the situation in other countries, that enhanced the fiscal and program strength of national governments (Loughlin 1997: 389; Watts 1999).

Governments in the U.S. then began to recognize the growing involvement of organized actors outside the government as also involved in public programming. These NGOs gradually became recognized as the third phase: *agents and partners of governments*. Through some grants but predominantly through contracts, government linked with nonprofit service agencies and for-profit vendors of services. In the case of nonprofits, they had been around for decades, but now the boundaries of the state expanded to include them in various forms of externalized direct services delivery, a sort of government for hire (Smith and Lipsky 1993: 5). For-profits had always been part of government procurement, and certain basic services such as building security and road building were regularly contracted out, but now direct government services such as public health care, services for the disabled, vocational rehabilitation, mental health, substance abuse counseling and services, and family violence services, along with finance and accounting support services and other management functions, were increasingly contracted out. As a result, both the direct service and support sectors led to new sets of alliances between governments at all levels and a host of public and private entities: service delivery nonprofits and private businesses, law firms, finance management firms, banks, and insurance companies as “the public administration problem has spread well beyond the borders of the government agency” (Salamon 1995: 2).

A fourth, and currently developing, *IGR network* phase of emphasis emerged out of the welfare state and NGO partnership expansions and became fully acknowledged in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Public agencies and NGOs network to exchange information, enhance
one another’s capabilities, smooth services interactions, and solve policy/program problems (Agranoff 2007). In some ways, intergovernmental networking began as a parallel activity to that of contracting when funders and their agents began to build on pre-existing contractor-government networks (Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke 2008). Also, networks comprised of local governments, business associations, and economic development agents have worked among themselves at the community level for four or five decades, and these entities have had extensive links with higher level governments to secure support to promote local economies (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Eisinger 1998; McGuire 2002).

A most interesting feature about the emerging set of intergovernmental networks—and what makes them different—is the way officials from the federal government, state governments, local governments, public and private universities, and NGOs representing the nonprofit sectors are challenged to sit down with one another at the same table to discuss, explore, negotiate, and solve issues interactively (Agranoff forthcoming; Radin et al. 1996). In earlier days, the most visible intergovernmental interactions tended to be bilateral and focused on government-to-government or government-NGO transactions. The network approach is clearly multilateral, collaborative, and attacks issues that transcend bilateral intergovernmental concerns. At this point it is a “culminating recognition” that Wright’s overlapping authority model extended beyond governments to include NGOs and other third parties in IGR.

Wright’s Influence on Policy Development: Program Relationships and Administrative Practices

Wright’s original description of the overlapping authority model focused on six “chief characteristics” (Wright 57). These are:
- Limited and dispersed power
- Modest and uncertain areas of autonomy
- High degree of potential or actual interdependence
- Simultaneous competition and cooperation
- Bargaining-exchange relationships
- Negotiation as a strategy for reaching agreement

The examples that he provided in the book tended to highlight specific relationships between the three levels of government in individual states or examined the behaviors in specific program areas in the aggregate, particularly as they reflected fiscal behaviors in programs which required matching state dollars to federal funds.

In the years that have elapsed, however, programs and policies that reflect the overlapping model illustrate a number of additional characteristics. They have created patterns that indicate real differences among and between states. These include different roles of specialized agencies in states and localities in dealing with the federal government, particularly differences between specialized agencies and general purpose government. They illustrate differences in the structures of government including diverse relationships between state legislatures and governors as well as significant differences in the authorities provided to counties and local governments by state constitutional systems. Perhaps most strikingly, they illustrate differences in specific program areas, reflecting both the policy design of the effort as well as the political imperatives of the initiative. These differences often make it difficult to separate the operations of a specific program from other efforts at all three levels of government. And these programs have devised new sets of partners that move beyond public sector players to the private and non-profit sectors.
The diversity of responses that illustrate the overlapping authority model can be seen in a number of contemporary policy and program areas. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly known as Food Stamps—provides federal money through state-operated programs. Although this program appears to be fairly straightforward, states have varied in their efforts to increase program access and participation. They have made a variety of changes in policy, procedures, and organization. According to a study by the Urban Institute and issued by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Most states view SNAP modernization as a fluid process over a broad range of activities that are not easily pinpointed, classified, or even separated from the modernization of other mainstream benefit programs… It is clear that at both the state and local level, the majority of offices are approaching modernization activities from a broad perspective—not limited to SNAP operations—and with widely different levels of administrative flexibility and views of what constitutes modernization (USDA, ii).

Another program that illustrates overlapping authority relationships is the effort run by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Network of Fusion Centers. Created between 2003 and 2006, these centers are designed to promote information sharing at the federal level between a number of federal agencies and state and local level agencies. As of July 2009, the DHS recognized at least 72 fusion centers, each of which is designed to respond to unique security issues in the specific area. According to DHS, the centers are:

Located in states and major urban areas throughout the country, fusion centers are uniquely situated to empower front-line law enforcement, public safety, fire service, emergency response, public health, critical infrastructure protection, and private sector security personnel to understand local implications of national intelligence, thus enabling local officials to better protect their communities. Fusion centers provide interdisciplinary expertise and situational awareness to inform decision-making at all levels of government. They conduct analysis and facilitate information sharing while assisting law enforcement and homeland security partners in preventing, protecting against, and responding to crime and terrorism. Fusion centers are owned and operated by state and
local entities with support from federal partners in the form of deployed personnel, training, technical assistance, exercise support, security clearances, and connectivity to federal systems, technology, and grant funding (DHS).

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was passed by Congress in 2002 and institutes sweeping new federal standards with new funding that regulated some features of state and local election processes. This legislation followed the 2000 Florida election crisis and attempted to establish a federal role in this policy area. Despite this, states retain substantial discretion in interpreting and applying federal requirements.

As a result, states gained significant new roles in the election process and some local governments viewed the requirements as an increase in the state role, superseding traditional discretion for this function by local governments. State and local government positions in controlling the election administration process provided them with significant leverage in making changes and in bargaining with federal officials over the shape of the mandate (Radin and Posner 2010).

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), signed by the White House in 2010, was viewed as federal health reform and was intended to expand access to insurance, increase consumer protections, emphasize prevention and wellness, improve quality and system performance, and curb rising health care costs. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the legislation that was enacted provided states with “numerous roles” and “various responsibilities” under the ACA, “ranging from implementing new health insurance requirements to expanding their Medicaid programs by January 1, 2014. In some cases, states may implement provisions—or defer to the federal government to do so—such as establishing a temporary high-risk pool or creating and administering health benefit exchanges… Many
provisions of the ACA were first implemented by states in their efforts to expand access to care and improve overall health system performance” (NCSL).

These four examples indicate the great variety of both designs and response by state and local agencies to federal policies. Although state and local governments are responding to what seems to be a clear federal policy, the diversity of situations across the nation makes it very difficult to establish a consistent response that would make sense in the face of that diversity.

**Expansion of Actors in an Externalized World**

A myriad of actors are now involved and even go beyond governmental units and the NGOs themselves. An IGR score card would have to include more than federal agencies and the 56 states and territories, over 80,000 units of government and over 500,000 elected officials. Clearly, broadening and externalizing programs have expanded the number and types of individuals and organizations who are involved in the IGR game. Their identities emerge everywhere and they are present in local, state, and national coalitions. Through contracting out, NGO partnerships and the quest for networking brings in considerably more actors to the game, many of whom are not governmental but are deeply involved in the work of government. Their role is built into the design of programs (especially block grants) and is evidence of their important position.

It is clear that this proliferation of actors has been “engendered” by federal action that began in the 1960s expansion of urban and social welfare programs. For example, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and its successor, Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), are charged with developing long-range (twenty-year) transportation plans, short-range (four-year) transportation improvement programs, annual work programs, and public participation plans.
An MPO—which comprises local elected officials (policy committees), local planning and engineering staff (technical support committees), and advisory bodies—must develop these plans in cooperation with its state transportation department, local mass transit and airport operators, land use entities, and the state environmental agency. Its planning and funding processes also require constant interaction with two entities within the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Authority (GAO 2009, 5-7). As a result, the MPO process involves multiple levels and layers of officials, both public and NGO, as actors in the process.

This set of relationships moves beyond the earliest set of coalition groups devised in IGR: the so-called PIIGs, or public interest groups. This began with the National Governors’ Association (NGA), the Council of State Governments, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the International City and County Managers Association (ICMA), and the National Association of Counties (NACO). All but ICMA are directly involved in lobbying and all but NGA have state level affiliate organizations. Also, other state elected officials, such as attorneys general and auditors have their own associations, some of which are associated with the Council of State Governments. There are even more organizations of program heads. Finally, paralleling many of these programs at the federal level are related advocacy associations. In intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), for example, there is the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the national Arc (formerly Association for Retarded Citizens), and the National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the latter two also with state-organized affiliates.

More actors in the overlapping I/DD system have yet to be identified. Some operate independently as “associations” while others are in more emergent and informal relationships.
These include federal-state I/DD planning councils, federally-funded state protection and advocacy commissions, state government legislative study commissions, state licensing boards and third-party accreditation commissions, and federally-funded state university research institutes. Also important for the evolution of I/DD programs is the consumer movement, organized in each state as client and client self-advocacy groups, the most prominent of which involve the national and state Arcs. As this example illustrates, intergovernmental now means a lot more than the standard government bodies.

**Impact on Decision-Making Processes and Theories**

Wright acknowledged that the overlapping authority model required a bargaining decision-making process—a decision-making process that was different from either a hierarchical or market approach. Yet both the legal and formal requirements attached to federal program implementation have tended to revert to those two traditional modes. Rules and regulations are established that rarely create an appropriate method of devising venues and processes for bargaining relationships. This is particularly problematic since there has been an increase in the number of actors involved in the policy and program implementation process.

As such, it is more common for federal officials to revert to an inclusive authority model where federal authority is predominant and for state officials to fall back on the coordinate authority model where state and federal players operate quite separately. This creates a confused situation where mixed messages are transmitted throughout the intergovernmental system and all three levels of government as well as other players—particularly third-party players—have confused expectations about their colleagues in the process.
A number of attempts have been made to establish decision-making processes that are more appropriate for overlapping authority situations. These include performance partnerships where players are viewed as co-equal players in the process and not conceptualized as a relationship between a principal and agents. They also include incentive schemes where attempts are made to induce behavior rather than command it. In still other cases, attempts have been made to establish venues for the negotiation of performance measures or to find a way to establish standards for the use of the federal money. Attempts have also been made to establish waivers of formal requirements because the situation in a location seems to warrant a different approach. Waiver authority is often limited to specific aspects of program requirements and is established formally in law or regulation. Somewhat different approaches have been developed in attempts to employ research and capacity building instruments that provide a somewhat more indirect way of influencing policy implementation (Radin 2012: 742-3). In all of these cases, the more complex the set of actors (moving beyond the three jurisdictions), the more difficult it is to find ways to deal with the different perspectives of the players (Radin 2006: Chapter 7).

**The Impact on Networks**

Network is now a widely used term in many contexts, ranging from informal networks of associates to formal structures. However, more precision is needed to understand the contemporary dimensions of the overlapping model of IGR. O’Toole (1997: 45) provides a useful starting point: “Networks are structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of others in some hierarchical arrangement.” The proliferation of these governing networks in many respects reflects not only the expansion of
intergovernmental programs to reach deeply across jurisdictions but also to capture important activities of the previously identified multiple actors.

Some of these networks are explicitly intergovernmental in the sense that they primarily involve governmental bodies; they are established under federal-state legislation or programs that carry federal funding incentives, whereas others emerge as a result of the complexities of problems and of programs. One such example of the former was the Federal-State Rural Development Council movement; it emerged as a result of federal multiagency funding encouragement, led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and involving a host of state agencies, tribal governments, NGOs, regional development agencies, and the private sector (Radin, Agranoff, Buntz, O’M. Bowman, Romzek, and Wilson 1996). Another federally established set of networks includes local One-Stop Career Centers, part of a system established under the 2000 Workforce Investment Act to coordinate and work to integrate existing federal employment and training programs. They are part of local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) at state and local levels, comprised of government officials, employers, and training program representatives. Others emerge as a result of federal-state-local-NGO overlap and complexity. For example, the Ohio Small Communities Environmental Infrastructure Group (SCEIG) is devoted to helping small towns acquire technical assistance and federal and state financing (Agranoff 2007: 67-72). Also, somewhat of a hybrid in origin is the Partnership for Rural Nebraska that includes the federally-supported state Rural Development Council but also brings together state, federal, and local government officials and the states’ area development commissions, along with educational institutions, to emphasize small business development, value-added agriculture, information technology, youth development, and community building. In this network, the core partners
include the Governor’s Office, area-based development agencies, and the federal-state Rural Development Council (*Ibid* 2007: 57-60).

As a manifestation of the overlapping IGR model, these networks can be chartered or non-chartered. While non-hierarchical, both types of networks share some characteristics: permanent status, regular formal meetings, a definable communication system, leaders and participants, taskforces or work groups, an identifiable governance structure, identifiable partners, and some form of division of labor/task allocation. Chartered networks are formally established as organized entities, often by intergovernmental agreement, registration as a 501c(3) nonprofit organization, by act or resolution of a state legislature, a governor’s executive order, and/or through corporate registration with state government, such as the secretary of state. Non-chartered networks have no such formal-legal status, but their continuing presence and operations, regular meetings, concrete problem-solving actions, websites, newsletters, and the like are testimony to their existence.

Not all such IGR networks perform the same functions. Indeed, many do not make the heady program decisions that are sometimes ascribed to them. One study of some 14 different chartered and non-chartered intergovernmental networks revealed four prevailing patterns (Agranoff 2007). First were those that were limited to exchanging agency policies and program information, technologies, and potential solutions but action was voluntary and only by and within the decision processes of the participating agencies/organizations. Second were networks where participating organizations not only exchanged program and technical information but also engaged in member educational and service capacity development in order to better implement agency-based solutions. Third were networks that capitalized on information exchange and capacity enhancement plus jointly explored and developed new programming avenues to be implemented within the array of public and private agencies. Fourth were those networks that
extended all three of these processes and developed negotiated collaborative courses of action and/or delivered services. While all of these different networks reflect the complexity of the overlapping model, the latter two also highlight the importance of bargaining as a strategy that Wright identifies as a keystone feature of contemporary IGR.

While networks in IGR have become essential components of the unfolding of the increasingly complicated overlapping model they must be understood as having notable limitations. McGuire and Agranoff (2010; 2011) conclude that whereas networks can and do find reasonable solution approaches they often run into operational, performance, or legal barriers that make action difficult or even impossible. Clearly, the design of many policies, what can and cannot be done, is paramount. As a result, networks face challenges in converting solutions into policy energy, assessing internal effectiveness, surmounting inevitable process barriers, mission drift, and more (O’Toole 1997: 45).

Finally, networks are clearly not the only collaborative game in town. For example, dyadic and triadic contacts and two-party contractual arrangements, along with formalized grant and loan programs are other means of connection. Many of these mechanisms arise because of the weak scope of network authority, the existence of power asymmetries, and the reality of who actually makes the decisions (Agranoff 2012: 14).

IGR networks are nevertheless governing mechanisms that do add to the public undertaking and help to sort out the “seeming mess” of overlapping authority. One list of network contributions to governance in a complicated world includes: problem identification and information exchange, identification of extant technologies, enhancement/development of emerging technologies, improving knowledge infrastructures, mutual capacity building, reciprocal strategies and programming, and joint policymaking/programming (Agranoff 2007: 222-229).
They appear to work best when multiple agencies, programs, stakeholders represented by administrators, specialists, and citizens work together to find workable courses of action between policies and programs that call for multiparty collaboration.

**The Overlapping Model and Performance Assessment**

For more than 20 years, the U.S. federal government has relied on various forms of performance assessment processes to devise accountability mechanisms that balance two competing imperatives. They attempt to hold third parties accountable for the use of federal dollars at the same time they deal with structures of programs that provide discretion for third parties in the way they use those federal monies.

Ironically, when the original performance measurement efforts were put in place they were welcomed by state and local governments because the new requirements focused on achievement of program outcomes rather than the federal government specifying requirements dealing with program inputs or measuring program outputs. States in particular believed that focusing on outcomes would provide them with the ability to define different pathways to achieving the program goals. But the experience during those 20 years has actually minimized the ability of state and local (and other third-party actors involved in program implementation) to play a role in the determination of program goals, specify program measures, and determine the appropriate information source to assess the program implementation. Indeed, two of the major efforts during that period—the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) enacted in 1993 and the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) put in place by President George W. Bush in 2001—both emphasized the primacy of the federal role in the performance measurement process. In fact, one could argue that both of these efforts actually ignored two of Wright’s models (the coordinate...
authority and the overlapping authority models) and actually moved to the inclusive authority which emphasized the predominant role of the national government. As a result, it not only clashed with advocates of state and local primacy but also ignored the increasingly important role of other third-party actors in the implementation process (Posner 523-51). Third-party perspectives can create significant problems in determining the outcomes that are expected (Radin 2008: Chapter 11).

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this problem was found in the way that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) dealt with block grant programs in its enforcement of the PART program. Block grants are explicitly designed to deal with legitimate differences between states and localities and thus provide various levels of discretion in implementation to the non-federal levels of government as well as other actors in the system. Yet in a number of block grant programs OMB explicitly defined the goals, specified program measures, and determined what kind of data would be used to assess performance.

The most public example of the limits of this strong federal role came in the assessment of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Congress explicitly acknowledged in the program law that there are many ways to achieve community development goals, including programs involving infrastructure, housing, public services, property acquisition, employment, and economic development. But OMB decided that the only appropriate goal to use to measure performance was economic development and thus gave the program a low rating (Housing Finance 2007). The resistance to the OMB rating moved across political lines and the rating was relatively quickly modified.

**Changes in Governmental Organizations**
The overlapping model of IGR, with its broadening scope of programming, dispersed policy development, multiple decision-makers and points of performance, and increased operation through networks that cut across jurisdictions and delivery agents, has changed the role of administering government agencies. Government agencies have both retained some of their main line functions and also have felt the need to operate outside of their bureaucratic structures in classic boundary spanning fashion (Thompson 1967). In order to deal with the overlapping model, federal, state, and local bureaucratic agencies enmeshed in intergovernmental programming remain in form and functional operation in some ways but nevertheless are challenged to operate in what can be called relational modes. That involves engaging with a host of external interlocutors while actively becoming engaged in various forms of collaborative/network activity. In contrast to those who signal that government hierarchies have lost their governing capacities (Rhodes 1997: 15) or have “hollowed out” (Milward, Provan, and Else 1993), it appears that agencies have really cast more of their operational features externally while maintaining important standard public functions. IGR interdependence clearly demands more “outside” work with other governments and with the NGO sector but not at the expense of all of the tasks of government as the various means of collaborative management arise and proliferate (Agranoff 2012).

The resulting configuration adds two distinct emergent public agency dimensions. First, bureaucratic agents must engage in interorganizational conductivity, that is direct or joint work with other governments (on an accelerated basis) and most often agencies within one’s own government, plus with NGOs in a host of activities, from program design and operation to performance assessment. These dyadic, triadic, and other means facilitate their changing missions. Saint-Onge and Armstrong (2002) identify these boundary spanning activities as the “conductive” aspects of organization and management, that is the need to “manage complex partnerships” (26).
For example, state and local workforce agencies need to link with public employment officers, chambers of commerce, community colleges and private training programs, vocational schools and programs, local business and industry, and so on. Conductivity clearly raises the external organizing quotient on an inside-outside basis.

Second is the involvement of governmental and non-governmental actors in networking activity. Involvement in intergovernmental networks like MPOs, Workforce Investment Boards, and state-authorized mental health and I/DD boards, along with specialized networks like the Ohio SCEIG, many ecosystem networks, and the Partnership for Rural Nebraska, have not only moved bureaucrats out of their offices to cross boundaries but have brought on higher, more engaged levels of conductivity. Virtually all of the identified networks bring government officials at all levels of general and special purpose governments to the same table to engage in the kinds of previously identified networking activities (Jenkins 2006). Moreover, in this role as network participants government officials have proved to be more than one among many at the table and to do more than convene and facilitate. Wondolleck and Jaffee’s (2000) study of environmental IGR networks concludes that in the most successful networks the government agency did not “step back” but “provided essential leadership that guided the group while simultaneously representing its own interests within the process. It ensured that the sideboards provided by existing law and regulations were in place and understood, and that those individuals present recognized that implementation of decisions could occur only through established administrative processes.” (244). This network role was identified by Hartley (2005: 30) as requiring governments “to steer action within complex social systems rather than to control solely through hierarchy or market mechanisms.”
Third, collaborative management and network involvement does not limit government agency roles to these two functions. Agencies clearly remain directly involved in core administrative processes. For example, the Medicaid program requires government agencies involved to play core lead roles in important standard bureaucratic arenas: establishing, maintaining, and assessing quality assurances; enforcing federal Medicaid statutes, regulations, and rules and state administrative laws; fiscal auditing and reporting; and program assessment. With regard to Medicaid these core functions place the federal and state bureaucracies, in particular, at the “hub” of operations no matter how externalized operations are and/or other actors are engaged in conductivity and networking. These core administrative functions play out in a variety of structures at all levels of government, leading to the highly variegated patterns across the U.S. Bureaucracy lives but it has evolved to deal with the overlapping model.

The resulting changes have brought on a host of new challenges to public management via bureaucracy as it is “decentered” (Bevir and Rhodes 2007; Moore and Hartley 2010), leading to the need for “new organizational capacities” (Kilduff and Tsai 2003: 93). A public administration literature on these newer and interactive approaches is emerging. However, it is not yet clear whether the traditional practices have the ability to move from behaviors that are embedded in Wright’s other two models. Networks are not organizations; they are distinct organized structures that emerge out of the interactions of organizations as government structures evolve and network actors work on issues (Fernandez and Rainey 2006). As in the case of other aspects of management reform, scholars and practitioners must not avoid respect for the importance of structure (Radin 2012: 41), as existing organizations manage outwardly and new structures emerge in multiple relational respects (Goss 2001). Bureaucracy lives with its old and its new functions.
Conclusions

The evolving nature of IGR in the quarter-century since Wright’s third edition was published has done nothing to disparage the power of the overlapping model. Indeed, it is even more appropriate as a place to begin to look for developments. Near the end of the 1988 volume Wright commented that part of system change was the “spread of privatization in a variety of forms and types” (456).

Today multiple governments, NGOs, associations, and clients work within complex adaptive systems looking for knowledge and solutions designed to solve problems that go beyond one organization, framing and reciprocally forging courses of action in a world of interdependent laws/regulations, governments, and NGOs.

The complexities of the current era have clearly compounded the overlapping model. Expanded federal-state-local-NGO programming has moved the field beyond the quotient of actors, broadened the venues of decision-making, brought on more networks and collaborating activity, and increased performance concerns with third-party involvement. In short, these developments have changed government organizations.

Wright’s original six characteristics remain but have grown in exponential fashion. Power is evermore dispersed; it can range from the federal government to the states, to local governments, NGOs, subcontractors, and on to the services clients or their advocates. Autonomy remains limited but it is ever harder to define with so many actors and interests. Interdependence is more readily recognized but increasingly problematic in practical terms. While cooperation is now in widespread demand, the competitive nature of NGO organizations (along with government agencies) is a force is increasingly encountered. Bargaining and exchange relationships remain but
are now understood to extend beyond concerns of program responsibility to include information, knowledge, resources, and a host of legal issues. And finally, negotiation remains a primary interactive tool, but it often follows other IGR processes, ranging from two-party regulatory and fiscal parameters to the endpoints of multiparty network processes. As the Wright analysis (49) suggested, neither governmental hierarchy nor exclusive authority prevails today. It is an ever expanding overlapping authority model that is the useful point of departure.
References


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i It is interesting that the constitution developed by the State of India upon independence presents that federal system as one which involves three types of relationships: one that is clearly within the authority of the national government, one that provides the authority to the states, and one that involves what is called concurrent powers (similar to Wright’s overlapping model).

ii It is not clear whether any changes have occurred as a result of the passage of the GPRA Modernization Act in 2010.