Examining the role of 'informality' in shaping city governance

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What is informal governance?

- What is 'informal' or just part of the 'formal' bureaucratic process?

- Informal:
    - Harsh (2013) 'Informal governance refers to means of decision making that is un-codified, non-institutional & where social relations & webs of influence play crucial roles'.

    - Christiensen *et al* (2013) 'when participation in the decision-making processes is not or cannot be codified & publicly enforced'.

Defining informal governance

- Van Tatenhove et al (2007) identify two central concepts:
  - (i) Whether settings are codified or formally sanctioned by actors
  - (ii) The 'rules of the game' & the way that rules guide & constrain the behaviour of actors

Forms of governance	Formal sanctioning	Rules of the game
Hierarchy	Bureaucracy	Government statute, guidance, strategies, funding agreements, action plans, annual reports
Markets	Contracts	Contractual agreements, legal documents
Networks	Collaboration	Partnership agreements, protocols, concordats, memorandum of understanding

The motives for informal governance

- Van Tatenhove *et al* distinguish between two strategic motives:
- Co-operative:
  - *Facilitating*
  - *Innovative space*
- *Conflicting*
  - *Critical voice*
  - Subversive

Strategies	Co-operative	Conflicting
Rule-directed (pre-given rules)	1. Facilitating	2. Critical voice
Rule-altering (no pre-given rules)	3. Innovative space	4. Subversive

The arenas

- Goffman's (1959) distinction between *front stage & back stage* is drawn upon to illustrate the distinction between formal & informal governance

Arenas	Formally sanctioned	Not formally sanctioned
Front stage (rule-directed, pre-given rules)	1. Formal front stage	2. Informal front stage • *Facilitating* • *Critical voice*
Back stage (rule-altering, no pre-given rules)	3. Formally sanctioned backstage • *Innovative space*	4. Sub-politics • *Subversive*

Conclusions

- This framework enables an examination of the inter-play between formal & informal practices
- This type of analysis is increasingly important as the UK government is using more informal governance to manage inter-governmental relations
- Informality may be helpful (or essential) in a context of spending cuts, reduced state capacity, complexity & uncertainty
- But, informality presents a challenge for government in assuring accountability & spatial equity, which could undermine attempts to devolve