

XII Annual Conference of the International Research Society for Public Management

Interactive Panel “Future Issues for Network Research”

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This will be the third Interactive Panel held at IRSPM. The idea of this panel is **not to present papers**. Instead, a number of questions (*) on the topic have been prepared in advance. All panelists are given the questions(*) and are asked to select one of them and to serve as an initiator of the discussion on the question. The idea is to have an open-ended and interactive discussion between the panelists and audience on the topic and to see what other issues and ideas emerge from the discussion. The panelists will consist of seasoned academics as well as students, a practitioner and more recent scholars.

The questions focus on the emerging issues around networks that have been identified by scholars and/or practitioners. This is a unique venue for a panel at a conference, but it provides a new avenue to raise issues and discuss new ideas on a topic of growing interest for academics and practitioners alike.

The panelists who have tentatively committed to being on the panel are:

Myrna Mandell (Co-Chair), Robyn Keast (Co-Chair), Filip DeRynck, Brian Head, Joop Koppenjan, Chris Skelcher, Eva Sorensen, Jacob Torfing and Denise Hogan

*** Questions for Interactive Panel “Future Issues for Network Research”**

1. What is the impact of a country’s culture/politics/economics on the formation of networks and how they operate? Do different contexts make a difference in how they are set up, degree of flexibility, accountability issues, equal partnerships, etc.. Are there distinguishing characteristics of networks regardless of these impacts?
2. Normative & Ethical issues: Who should be included/excluded from membership in a network? Does the impact of citizen participation/empowerment have an impact on the exclusion/inclusion of less powerful players on membership in networks?
3. Is there a difference between management and leadership in networks? How are they similar? What are the differences? Do the differences make a difference? (NOTE: See also question # 5)
4. What is/should be the influence/role of parent organizations on the members of networks?

5. What are the critical behaviours for managing networks? Is it the same for all types of networks? If not, what are the differences/similarities? (NOTE: See also question # 3)
6. Performance measures for networks: Are qualitative measures as important, more important or less important than quantitative measures? Can we reconcile the two? (NOTE: See also question # 7)
7. Are there differences between how community, government, industry evaluate networks and how academics evaluate them? What difference do these differences make? Why are there differences? (NOTE: See also question # 6)
8. What are the key elements in making networks work? Are any more important than the others? Why?
9. Is the language of IGR suitable for networks? What changes, if any, are needed? What problems, if any, does the IGR language present for the application to networks?
10. Who is/should be accountable for performance and/or outcomes of networks? How does this impact on the role of government, the non-profit sector, the private sector, community groups? (NOTE: This could possibly be coupled with question # 13)
11. Many authors now indicate that capacity building of members of networks is needed as a foundation for the network to operate effectively. What would be involved in this? What type of training, if any, would be needed?
12. How can members' desire to maintain their own interests be channelled to more overarching goals and social production? Do these interests need to be channelled in order for networks to be effective?
13. Are networks really needed to solve certain problems or is it really more of a political/administrative tool? Do networks impact the responsibility of public bodies in a negative way (i.e., government can blame the network for not working and therefore not take any responsibility for network operations)? (NOTE: This could possibly be coupled with question # 10)
14. How do we sustain networks over time? (Consider the "burn-out" factor and how to overcome it)
15. There are both formal (agreements, MOUs, etc.) and informal "rules" in networks. Do both have an equal impact on the operation of a network or is one type more important than the other? Does it make a difference as to what type of network is involved?

Questions specifically for Collaborative Networks:

1. What distinguishes interdependence of members in collaborative networks from dependence of members in other types of networks?
2. What is meant by systems change?
3. If the kinds of innovative solutions that are the key in collaborative networks are more complex and rely on long-term processes, how can short term outcomes, that are based on existing ways of working be considered a measure of effectiveness?
4. Can changes in collaborative networks, leading to more innovative solutions, involving new kinds of relationships and new ways of working and organizing, be achieved without corresponding changes in the parent organizations? (Can collaborative networks operate in a bureaucratic environment?)