

Panel 1: Public Values: The Next Step

Organizers:

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This panel aimed to be a somewhat more focused successor of the successful 'public values' panels that were a part of the NIG conferences in 2006 and 2007. With this panel, we wanted to take the next step in discussing public values and public values research. If enough papers of sufficient quality and coherence were submitted, the organizers planned to select the most eligible papers for a symposium issue of an international journal (e.g., *Public Integrity, Administration & Society, International Review of Administrative Sciences*)

This panel links to two sub-themes of the NIG research program; Citizens and governance, and Public management in a joined-up world. Addressed in a broader sense, public values concern what is valued as a public good or a public interest by citizens and societies and subsequently has to be actualized through a particular set of governance measures and programs. From an organizational and professional perspective, public values concern those values that should aim and guide the conduct and decision-making of public managers in public institutions.

Given the different organizational and environmental factors that are of influence on the conduct of public institutions and managers in the contemporarily 'joined-up world', including market-like values and increasing pressures from citizens and organizations that are in-between the classical public and private sphere, it becomes ever more complex to decide upon which public values should be actualized in what way in different kinds of situations.

Two questions, with both normative as well as empirical components, were at the core of the panel:

1. How to study public values?

Public values have been at the forefront of many recent debates in Public Administration in different shapes and forms. Sometimes it seems like everybody is discussing public values, but it turns out that very different things are addressed within the same debate. Some authors discuss the safeguarding of public values in a time of privatization (De Bruijn and Dicke 2006) or economic individualism (Bozeman 2007), or reconciliation of public values in a time of business-like public management philosophies (Kernaghan 2000; Frederickson 2005).

Others address public values in general and propose sets of public values (Gregory 1999; Tait 1997) or derive specific sets of public values through empirical research (Beck Jørgensen 2006; Kernaghan 2003; Schmidt and Posner 1986; Van der Wal et al. 2008). Subsequently, the examples of public values that are mentioned in the literature differ widely (cf. De Bruijn and Dicke 2006: 718). The first category concerns more those public values at the level of societies and democracies, while the second focuses on those values that (should) guide public sector employees, organizations and policies.

Despite the mushrooming scholarly attention to the topic, not much progress has yet been made with regard to conceptualization, methodology and accumulation of research findings. As a consequence, there is an urgent need for a more informed and structured (and hopefully, accumulative) discussion on how values can be studied. This is not only a methodological question, as ways to study values are closely connected to how the concept is conceptualized and what its ontological status is considered to be.

Papers that address the following aspects and questions directly or indirectly are invited for submission:

- What are values and what are public values in particular? How do moral values and other values relate to one another? Can they at all be studied in such a way that valid scientific knowledge about reality is a result of such a study? I.e., ontological and epistemological aspects of value research?
- And if so, how should values be studied and, if possible, measured in both quantitative and qualitative terms? How has this been done so far within public administration and other disciplines?

2. How to implement public values?

There is an abundance of values around in both the study and practice of public administration. Managerial values concerning the proper functioning of an organization, moral values with regard to the behavior of functionaries and collectives, and so on. On the one hand, all or most public administration theories are concerned with realizing values (representativeness, efficiency, integrity). At same time, it is obvious that especially the realization of moral values pose specific problems. Classic in this respect is the Friedrich-Finer debate. Can we develop 'tools' to ensure integrity? Or is this contradictory? Do codes and oaths result in desired attitudes and actions? As for instance Bozeman (2007) states, there seems to be a major difference in the possibility to generate (analytical and implementation) 'tools' depending on the approach taken: a 'public value' approach seems weak, whilst economic individualism, utilitarianism, and so on, allow for models, quantification, even calculation. Does this hamper the impact of the research on values?

Papers can tackle these issues from a variety of perspective. Possible questions concern:

- How to implement (moral) values? Can we construct integrity, or is a managerial approach problematic?
- How to deal with conflict and moral dilemma in an organization?
- What should be the perspective in public administration: individual integrity or organizational integrity?

References

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