

**Panel 10:**  
**Panel Proposal**  
**NIG Annual Conference 2015**

**Quality of Governance and Public Values**

**Organizers:**

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Broad developments such as globalization, individualization, and the increased use of information technology have major implications for government: society asks for new governance arrangements. Scientific evidence regarding the nature, the legitimacy and the effectiveness of these new steering paradigms is, however, scarce. The panel will contribute to the theoretical puzzles on the emerging governance research agenda, how to deal with the new problems, thus contributing to the scholarly debates on the innovation of public institutions, part of the public service delivery in which all kinds of public values, rather than private values, play a role; such as transparency, equality and impartiality.

The fundamental challenge to public institutions in serving the public interest, is to balance the pursuit of different, inevitably contradictory, standards. Trade-offs between valued principles are thus an ineluctable fact of any designing process. For instance, services that are fully responsive to the needs and wants of some citizens may not be very efficient in terms of the interests of the wider community. Besides, ideas of effective operational structures could be in breach of the law. Many public organizations have put together codes which lists those values that should characterize the quality of governance. The idea of good governance is often given substance by normative statements on those values that a public organization such as a university should adhere to. However, the meaning of all these values in daily practice remains unclear. Moreover, easy as it is to applaud specific values – who is against openness, impartiality, or efficiency? – and to set these values down on paper in a codified form, it is much more difficult to subsequently act in line with all of them. In daily practice, multiple values that are all desirable will conflict in such a way that choices have to be made.

**What public values matter, what tensions are there between public values, and how to deal with these tensions?**

Contributions may either be theoretical/conceptual or empirical. Theoretical papers may critically discuss quality of governance or the public values concept, focus on social or political backgrounds, outline the institutional design of governance systems, raise the issue of coping with governance

conflicts (value-conflicts) and/or reflect on the possibilities for good governance assessment and evaluation.

Empirical papers may present (evaluation) studies regarding (empirical) tensions between public values and, subsequently, the design, functioning and effects of governance systems that enable to balance and manage such tensions, at different levels of public administration. Especially comparative papers (between different public sector domains or between countries and systems) are welcomed.

Papers in English are strongly preferred!