

Panel 13:

Panel Proposal

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: FROM START TO FINISH

Organizers

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Theme Description

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are popular governance arrangements because they are considered to be efficient and effective ways for realizing public infrastructures. Many definitions and types of PPPs exist (Klijn 2010; Weihe 2008), but a general working definition of PPP is: an enduring contractual relationship between two or more partners of which at least one is a public body, in which both public and private partners bring some kind of resources to the partnership and in which responsibilities and risks are shared, for the purpose of delivering public infrastructure-based products and/or services (Grimsey and Lewis 2004). A currently very popular PPP type for the realization of public infrastructure is the Design, Build, Finance, Maintain and Operate (DBFMO) concession contract. Alliance-like partnerships are found more in urban projects, e.g. Urban Regeneration Companies.

PPPs affect many actors. First of all, public and private actors with often widely divergent interests, have to work together to successfully develop and implement a project. Also, PPPs affect local stakeholders such as citizens, business and municipalities. Often, these societal actors respond to the PPP projects to protect or advance their own interests. PPPs, in sum, often emerge and have to be implemented in networks of actors. The complex network dependencies involved require smart governance for the PPPs to be developed and implemented successfully.

Despite their growing popularity with governments, scholars have warned us that actually not that much is known about the results of PPPs. For instance, Hodge and Greve (2007) showed that the performance of PPPs is mixed at best; Kort and Klijn (2011) show that there is no correlation between the co-operation form and performance; Reynaers' (2014) research shows that public values might be at stake in PPPs; and Jones and Noble (2008) and Verweij (2015) point to the fact that we actually know very little about the implementation of PPPs. Hence, "despite their continuing popularity with governments, greater care is needed to strengthen future evaluations and conduct ... assessments away from the policy cheerleaders" (Hodge and Greve, 2007, 545). This panel subscribes to this call.

After a successful first meeting at last year's NIG Annual Work Conference, this second NIG panel meeting on PPPs aims to continue the discussion on the results of Public-Private Partnerships, and on how the results might be studied and improved. A pressing question is how partnerships can be organized and managed in a smart way, such that they achieve their intended results. Of importance in this respect is also the relationship between PPP planning and organization, and their implementation. Due to the complexity and networked nature of the projects, good intentions can easily fail in implementation. This raises questions such as: how do partners maintain good rapport in implementation when pressure and stress increases? And: how are stakeholders to be involved in implementation? Scholars suggested that project planning requires open-system approaches to create support and cooperation, and that implementation requires more project management, closed system approaches; however, research has also indicated that closer stakeholder involvement and interaction in implementation yields better results (e.g. Verweij, 2015). The panel welcomes (critical) papers that deal with these and related questions.

Linkage NIG Subtheme

This panel is directly linked to two of the overarching NIG subthemes, namely Public Management and Multi-Actor Governance in Complexity. PPPs can be considered governance arrangements that incorporate private sector involvement and management techniques such as performance-related pay and performance monitoring. Therewith, they ought to enable public actors to provide public services more efficiently and effectively. PPPs are an embodiment of both public management and multi-actor governance. As said, they do not only involve multiple public actors (often national, local and/or regional governments are involved) and private actors. Often, many different other actors are involved such as banks, external advisors, various citizens groups, and environmental and economic interest groups. Thus, PPP projects are interesting and exiting vehicles to study different themes that are connected to multi-actor governance.

Type of papers

We especially encourage paper submissions that incorporate empirical and comparative work. This panel invites papers including but not limited to the following topics:

1. Planning and execution: what is the relation between project planning and the actual execution of PPPs projects?
2. Implementation: how are and should PPPs (better) be managed?
3. Effectiveness: do PPPs provide what they promise?
4. Conflict solution: how to prevent and overcome conflicts between partners?
5. International comparisons and future challenges.

Participation of senior members

We will personally invite various senior members to present and discuss papers. A tentative list is: Hans de Bruin, Jurian Edelenbos, Nicolette van Gestel, Joop Koppenjan, Maurits Sanders, Geert Teisman, and Koen Verhoest.

References

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