

Panel 12:

Behavioural Public Administration:

How can we better understand the behaviour of individual citizens and civil servants in the public domain?

Panel Proposal for the NIG Annual Work Conference 2015

Panel Chairs:

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Panel outline

For a long time public administration scholars have been interested in the behaviour of citizens and public servants (Whitaker, 1980; Vigoda & Golembiewski, 2001; Simon, 1965). Various prominent scholars have called for an integration of behavioural elements and psychological research in public administration, (Mosher, 1956; Raadschelders, 2013). We define behavioural public administration (BPA) as: *a subfield that is characterized by the interdisciplinary analysis of public administration from the micro-perspective of individual behaviour and attitudes by drawing upon recent advances in our understanding of the underlying psychology and behaviour of individuals* (Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Leth Olsen, & Tummers, 2015, forthcoming). Three elements are central to this definition. First, it takes employees, managers and citizens from the public domain as unit of analysis (micro-level) (Ibid.) Secondly, it entails the study of how people behave and form attitudes. Thirdly, it does so by integrating insights from psychology and the behavioural sciences into the field of public administration (Ibid.).

Other disciplines like economics, management studies and political science have adopted psychological research, which has led to the rise of fields like behavioural economics, political psychology and organizational behaviour. Only recently there has been an increase of public administration studies borrowing and extending theories from the field of psychology. Below, we give examples of 1) substantive work in this relatively new subfield of behavioural public administration and 2) methodological innovations that have fuelled the recent interest in behavioural public administration.

Van Ryzin (2013) has investigated the expectation disconfirmation theory of citizen satisfaction. Bellé (2015) has focused on the actions of nurses in public hospital, by creating conditions with low and high Public Service Motivation. Jilke (2015) focuses on competition and choice options in public services. Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2014) have investigated the role of government transparency on citizens reactions and judgements of municipalities and the role of performance information is currently being studied by a number of scholars (James, 2011; James & Moseley, 2014; Kroll, 2015).

At the same time, experimental methods are now complementing the methodological tool-kit of public administration scholars (Margetts, 2011). Besides the application of an experimental logic of inquiry, psychological research has developed a reputation for a rigorous treatment of issues of measurement. Paying attention to measurement bias is an additional methodological opportunity that arises when working towards a greater integration of psychology within the study of public administration. A possibility here is scale validation methods. Although in general public administration scholars do not employ scale development, there are exceptions, such as work on Public Service Motivation (Perry, 1996) and policy alienation (Tummers, 2012). Furthermore, some scholars tested the value of using short scales in survey designs (Kruyen, 2012).

This panel focuses on the use of psychological insights within the field of public administration. This includes attitudes and judgments of citizens the behaviour of citizens and public servants and the interaction of public sector actors at micro level. Therefore, the central question we pose is: How can we understand the attitudes and behaviour of individual citizens and civil servants in the public domain?

Types of papers

In this panel, we welcome:

1. Papers that focus on psychological theories within the realm of public sector organizations
2. Papers that employ sophisticated methods using the experimental logic of enquiry and other techniques of measurement.
3. Papers that focus on the discrepancy between (self) reported and actual behaviour within the realm of public sector organizations
4. Papers that test the validity of macro-level public administration theories with micro-level (individual) data
5. Papers that develop and test psychometrically sound scales

Link with NIG Public Management sub-theme

This panel is related to the Public Management sub-theme of the NIG research program. Specifically, our panel is linked to the knowledge goal of Public Management in Professional Organizations as this panel aims to attract papers that study interactions with and attitudes towards actions of public organizations. Moreover, this panel is loosely connected to the Evaluation of impacts of public management reforms as reforms often have impacts at the individual level: public servants and citizens.

Tentative list of potential participants (To be invited)

- Peter Hupe (EUR)
- Marieke van Genugten (RUN)
- Marlies Honigh (RUN)
- Steven Van de Walle (EUR)
- Alex Lehr (RUN)
- Nadine van Engen (EUR)
- Marcel van Assen (TIL)
- Thomas Schillemans (UU)
- Joram Feitsma (UU)
- Constanze Beirlen (Gesis Muenster)
- Paul 't Hart (UU)
- Wouter Vandenabeele (UU)
- Sebastian Jilke (EUR)
- Erik-Hans Klijn (EUR)
- Babette Bronkhorst (EUR)
- Jasper Eshuis (EUR)
- Noortje de Boer (EUR)

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