Panel proposal for XXIII IRSPM conference 2019 in Wellington, NZ.

EXPERIMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Under the umbrella concept of experimental governance (Kronsell & Mukhtar-Landgren, 2018; Sabel and Zeitlin, 2008) we find a myriad of national, regional as well as local governmental activities aiming to try out, evaluate, scale up and transfer innovations to other contexts with the ambition to contribute to broader system change. All tiers of contemporary (western) governments are involved in somewhat far-reaching transformations regarding governance as well as organization. We can, for instance, observe an increasing interest and use of 'policy labs' or 'testbeds' to initiate activities that may become future initiatives, 'pilots' and 'short-term projects' to try out innovative initiatives and develop practices to handle complex problems that are thought of as problematic to solve within the realm of the ordinary organization (Styhre, 2007). What is experimented with is the content of policy, as well as the way policy-makers and stakeholders come together to develop, facilitate and enable policy.

> If governments want to know what works, they have to be willing to invest in finding out. That will require them to experiment. […] a surprising amount of the experimental method can be used in everything from the design of forms or websites to how police catch burglars (Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive of the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts in the UK.).

The different techniques and tools of experimental governance have been approached from a range of different research fields and traditions such as public sector projectification (Hodgson et al., 2019), pilot studies (Bailey et al., 2017), social innovation literature (Howaldt et al., 2014), evaluation and evidence-based research (Lundvig et al., 2011; Ettelt, 2017), and research on policy labs and test beds (Kronsell & Mukhtar-Landgren, 2018). What they all have in common is the interest of the new, the innovative and the unknown or uncertain as means to contribute to change. The different research fields also share the characteristics of being somewhat young and appear to be growing.

In this panel we want to gather researchers from all these (and other) research fields to explore different theoretical and conceptual understandings of experimental initiatives and activities taken by governments, public management and public-sector organizations to contribute to societal and/or organizational development. We especially welcome short-form essays on central theoretical issues in relations to experimental governance, challenges, tensions, or gaps that warrant further development or re-examination.

Chairs
Damian Hodgson, Professor of Organisational Analysis, Alliance Manchester Business School
Dalia Mukhtar-Landgren, Senior Lecturer in Political Science at Lund University, Sweden.
Stefanie Ettelt, Associate Professor in Health Policy at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Mats Fred, PhD in Political Science at Malmö University

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