

Making politics visible – using interpretive methods to explore the politics involved in public sector innovation.

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Description

The panel will explore “central questions in understanding how knowledge and the politics of public problems take shape and change” (Moore 2017, 1491). In so doing we seek to examine ways that interpretive methods can illuminate the role of politics in the processes which underpin policy innovation.

To develop innovative policies and programs, policy actors need to challenge and replace existing “characteristics and artefacts in the public policy domain, such as policy objectives and measures, instruments and resources, alliances and institutions” (Duijn 2018, S35). To do so requires judgement. Understanding the norms, values and ideologies which underpin those judgements provides fresh insights into understanding change, as well as resistance to change.

Interpretive methods give us the tools to be able to understand the meaning making processes involved in innovation. They help us to understand the ways problems are constructed and understood, the way that ideas about causes and solutions are limited, the way that innovation can be constrained through framing. Despite this, they continue to be overlooked by public management researchers and practitioners wedded to more traditional approaches.

We invite papers that use interpretive methods to explore the politics involved in public sector innovation. We take a broad approach to interpretive methods, because we acknowledge it is in this diversity that fresh insights are made possible.

References

- Duijn, Michael. 2018. "The value of reflection on the evolving individual and collective practice of public policy innovation in water management: An action science approach." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 171 (S):S34-S44. doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.09.193.
- Moore, David. 2017. "Making visible the politics and ethics of alcohol policy research." *Addiction* 112 (8):1490-1494. doi: 10.1111/add.13812.