P122 / Public policies for hybrid governance

Topic : Policy Design, Formulation & Instruments

Chair : Jan-Erik Johanson (Tampere University)

Second Chair : Jarmo Vakkuri (University of Tampere)

Third Chair : Romulo Pinheiro (University of Agder)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Contemporary societies are increasingly characterised by hybridity. Public, private and community actors participate in policy processes through networks, partnerships, public-private organisations and other arrangements that cross established sectoral and institutional boundaries. Although governance research has examined these developments extensively, their implications for public policy formation remain insufficiently understood. This panel addresses this gap by distinguishing between two related but analytically different perspectives: the hybridity of policies and policies for hybridity.

The hybridity of policies refers to the ways in which public policies themselves become hybrid. Policies may combine different and potentially competing goals, institutional logics, instruments, modes of coordination and principles of accountability. Instead of relying on a single policy instrument or mode of governance, contemporary policies are often implemented through policy mixes that combine regulation, economic incentives, information, contracting, partnerships and self-regulation. Policy formulation and implementation may consequently involve multiple actors whose interests, resources and understandings of public value differ. From this perspective, hybridity is an internal characteristic of policy design, policy processes and policy practices.

Policies for hybridity, by contrast, concern public interventions that intentionally create, regulate, support or transform hybrid arrangements. Governments may establish public-private partnerships, encourage cross-sectoral collaboration, outsource public services, support social enterprises, or introduce co-production and collaborative governance mechanisms. Such policies do not simply operate in hybrid environments. They actively shape the conditions under which hybridity emerges and determine how authority, ownership, risks, resources and responsibilities are distributed among participating actors.

The distinction is analytically important because hybrid policies do not necessarily promote hybrid organisational or governance arrangements, while policies intended to foster hybridity may rely on relatively conventional policy instruments. The two processes may nevertheless intersect and reinforce one another. Policies for hybridity can generate new policy mixes and practices, while the hybridity of policies can alter the composition, behaviour and accountability of participating organisations.

The panel therefore asks: How can the hybridity of policies and policies for hybridity be conceptualised and distinguished? How do hybrid policy goals, instruments and practices influence policy formation and implementation? Through which mechanisms do public policies create, maintain or transform hybrid governance arrangements? How do these developments affect accountability, legitimacy, coordination and public value creation? Finally, what tensions and paradoxes arise when different institutional logics and sectoral interests are combined?

The panel’s scientific objective is to connect public policy research with the study of hybrid organisations and hybrid governance. By developing the distinction between the hybridity of policies and policies for hybridity, the panel provides a framework for comparative conceptual and empirical analysis. It also contributes to research on policy design, policy mixes, implementation and policy practices by explaining how hybridity simultaneously constitutes an attribute of policies and an object of public intervention.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers may address, among other possibilities, the following issues and questions:

How does the distinction between the hybridity of policies and policies for hybridity change our understanding of agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy implementation and executive government? What kinds of theoretical, conceptual or methodological tools are needed to identify the relationships between these two dimensions?
What effects do public policies have on the development of hybrid organisations and governance arrangements? Under what conditions do policies increase, stabilise, redirect or reduce hybridity? Papers

may examine both intended policy outcomes and unintended consequences arising from regulation, funding arrangements, ownership structures, contracting practices or other forms of public intervention.
How can the policy treatment of hybrid organisations be studied empirically? In what respects does the steering, regulation or evaluation of hybrids differ from the governance of conventional public agencies or private enterprises? Are there significant differences between policy fields, institutional systems or levels of government?
How do different types of hybrid organisations, including state-owned enterprises, social enterprises, universities, public-private partnerships and third-sector service providers, interpret and adapt to public policies? How do organisational characteristics, ownership arrangements and competing institutional demands shape their responses?
How do community-based self-governance, co-regulation, corporate social responsibility and entrepreneurial self-regulation interact with governmental authority? Papers may explore whether such arrangements complement, transform or challenge conventional policy instruments and administrative responsibilities.
To what extent, and through what mechanisms, is hybridity linked to transnational governance and policy diffusion? Relevant topics include the transfer and translation of hybrid organisational models, regulatory practices and policy instruments across national, sectoral and institutional contexts.
What implications does hybridity have for accountability, transparency, democratic control, legitimacy and public value? How are responsibilities attributed when authority and resources are distributed across organisational and sectoral boundaries? What tensions or paradoxes emerge, and how are they managed in practice?
The panel welcomes conceptual, theoretical and empirical papers employing qualitative, quantitative, comparative or mixed-method research designs. Contributions may focus on organisations, policy instruments, policy processes, policy fields, national systems or transnational arrangements. Comparative papers and studies that connect organisational-level developments with broader policy processes are particularly encouraged.

A further objective of the panel is to present and advance ongoing work on special issues and edited volumes in this field. This includes the work-in-progress volume Modern Guide to Hybrid Governance, to be published by Edward Elgar, which follows Public Policies for Hybrid Governance (Edward Elgar, 2025). The panel will offer an opportunity to discuss emerging contributions, develop comparative perspectives and identify future directions for collaborative research and publication.