W01 / Putting public sector innovation in context

Topic : Public Administration & Governance

Chair : Emre Cinar (University of Portsmouth)

Second Chair : Ali Guenduez (University of St. Gallen)

Third Chair : Mehmet Akif Demircioglu (Carleton University)

Fourth Chair : Roberto Vivona (University of St. Gallen)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Public sector innovation is deeply influenced by its context: from leadership and culture within organizations to collaboration across networks and the wider political and institutional environment. Despite decades of research, we still know too little about how and why certain innovations succeed, spread, or endure under specific contextual conditions. This workshop seeks to advance that conversation by bringing together scholars examining the organizational, meso-, and macro-level contexts of innovation in policy and public services.

We invite empirical, theoretical, and methodological papers that explore:

How leadership, learning, and organizational routines shape the initiation, implementation and sustainability of innovation.

How inter-organizational collaboration, networks, and professional communities influence diffusion and legitimacy of innovations

How political institutions, reform trajectories, and administrative traditions open or constrain opportunities for innovation

How power relations and governance design mediate innovation across multi-level systems.

Comparative, longitudinal, and cross-level analyses are particularly welcome, as are contributions that draw on under-researched regions and governance traditions. We encourage papers using qualitative, quantitative, mixed, or network-based methods to capture the complexity of context and power in innovation processes.

The workshop will feature interactive sessions organized by thematic clusters, followed by integrative discussions to identify emerging frameworks and collaborative research opportunities for a special issue on “Putting Public Sector Innovation in Context”.

ABSTRACT

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Public sector innovation is increasingly recognized as a multi-level process shaped by organizational capabilities, inter-organizational dynamics, and political–institutional environments. Yet, despite growing attention to innovation in governance and public management, the role of context remains underexplored. Why do some public sector innovations thrive and scale, while others stall or remain symbolic? This workshop brings together scholars examining how different contextual layers (organizational, meso-, and macro-level) enable or constrain innovation in policy design, implementation, and service delivery.

The workshop situates PSI within complex governance systems where political authority, fiscal capacity, and accountability are distributed across multiple tiers of government. It invites theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that address how contextual interdependence, governance design, and power relations shape innovation trajectories. Key themes include how leadership and culture drive organizational change; how networks, partnerships, and professional communities support the diffusion and legitimacy of innovation; and how political institutions, administrative traditions, and reform trajectories define the boundaries of transformative change.

The session will be organized around thematic clusters corresponding to these three levels, followed by integrative discussions exploring cross-level linkages and power dynamics. By bridging insights from public management, policy studies, and institutional theory, the workshop aims to advance a comparative and power-sensitive understanding of innovation processes.

Participants will collaboratively identify emerging research priorities and methodological approaches to studying innovation in diverse governance contexts. The workshop will conclude with plans for a collective

research agenda and the development of a special issue on “Putting Public Sector Innovation in Context”. In doing so, it seeks to connect global scholarship on PSI with new empirical frontiers, highlighting how multi-level governance, contextual asymmetries, and institutional diversity shape the possibilities for innovation in public service systems.

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Session 1

Monday, July 6th 10:15 to 12:15 (3202)

Introduction
Emre Cinar (University of Portsmouth)
Ali Guenduez (University of St. Gallen)
Mehmet Akif Demircioglu (Carleton University)
Roberto Vivona (University of St. Gallen)

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Session 2

Monday, July 6th 14:00 to 17:15 (3202)

Administrative tradition as evolving context: Longitudinal evidence from Estonia
Marlene Jugl (Bocconi University)

The 2017 Municipal Fiscal Reform in Quebec: A New Framework for Innovation
Tommy Gagné-Dubé (Université de Sherbrooke)

The Governance Arrangement of ColaboraGov: Innovation in Shared Services within the Brazilian State
Marcos Rodrigues (Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services)
Aliny Vanzetto (Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services)
Rodrigo Brito (Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services (Brazil))
Daniele Borges (Ministry of Management and Innovation and Public Services of Brazil)

Putting collaborative public sector innovation in context
Emre Cinar (University of Portsmouth)

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Session 3

Tuesday, July 7th 09:00 to 12:15 (3202)

(Virtual) Building Innovative Public Organizations: Capabilities, Leadership, and Collaboration for Public Value

Bushra Faizi (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

Evren Tok (Hamad Bin Khalifa University)

(Virtual) Making Innovation Stick: Collective Intelligence, Context, and Public Sector Innovation Labs

Sarah Dagher Al Feghali (Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chausees)

Contexts of Public?Sector Innovation: The Case of Agricultural Innovation in China and India

Stuti Rawat (University College London, University of London)

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Session 4

Tuesday, July 7th 14:00 to 17:15 (3202)

Varieties of Local Government Innovation

Quinton Mayne (Bloomberg Center for Cities at Harvard University)

From Symbolic Reform to Enduring Innovation: Organizational Capacity and the Context of Equity-Centered Change

Katie Friedman (Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development)

Kathleen Yang-Clayton (Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development)

Dhruv Shah (Cept university)

Examining the Capacity of Municipal Governments to Innovate: Typologies, Tools and Scale

Zachary Spicer (York University)

Joseph Lyons (University of Western Ontario)

From Users to Co-Creators: Policy Feedback and Active Citizenship in the Multi-Level Governance of the EUDI Wallet

Stefan Handke (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden (FH))

Marianna Rovner (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden (FH))

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Session 5

Wednesday, July 8th 09:00 to 12:15 (3202)

The New Spirit of SNCF: Digital Transformation as a Multi-Level Ideological Operator (2018–2021)

Tiffany Matias (Université de Montpellier I)

Still not there: The Government of Canada and Digital Service Transformation

Jacky Tweedie (Carleton University)

Digital Public Services as Context-Conditioned Innovation: Institutional Dynamics, Governance Constraints, and Reform Durability in a Transitional State

Davit Oboladze (University of Nottingham)

From Algorithms to Institutional and relational Capabilities: How Organizational and Governance Conditions Shape AI Adoption in Health Public Services

Robin Castro Gil (Universidad ICESI)

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Session 6

Wednesday, July 8th 14:00 to 16:00 (3202)

Collective Discussion and Future Plans
Emre Cinar (University of Portsmouth)
Ali Guenduez (University of St. Gallen)
Mehmet Akif Demircioglu (Carleton University)
Roberto Vivona (University of St. Gallen)