GOVERNANCE & COMPLEX NETWORKS

IN TIMES OF TURBULENCE AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

April 15-16, 2020

University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway

The Department of Political Science and Management and the Center for Digital Transformation (CEDIT) at the University of Agder (UiA) will host a mini conference taking place in the beautiful, sunny city of Kristiansand in Southern Norway. The purpose of the conference is to bring together researchers and practitioners to discuss relevant research aspects concerning change and innovation in the public sector in times of turbulence and digital transformation. Across the world, public organizations and agencies responsible for delivering a multiplicity of services – health, education, social care, etc. – are facing unprecedented challenges associated with broader government-led reforms aimed at making the sector more efficient, accountable and user-centered. This occurs against the backdrop of increasing turbulence (social, political, economic, cultural) and the transition towards a knowledge-centered and digital-oriented society and economy. As a result, new modes of governance, leadership and citizen engagement are being experienced and tested, triggering significant effects for established concepts of leadership and coordination. A mini-conference focusing on these trends provides an opportunity to take stock of ongoing policy and scholarly developments across several sub-disciplinary fields and geographies.

This event precedes IRSPM's 2020 annual conference in neighboring Tampere, Finland, gathering scholars and practitioners working across multiple topics and provides an unprecedented opportunity for developing new research collaborations and partnerships, including interdisciplinary ones. Moreover, it is an excellent platform for early career researchers to receive direct feedback on their work by more experienced scholars. The conference features three parallel tracks (see call for abstracts) reflecting the multi-disciplinary intent and the overall theme of the mini-conference is endorsed by two Special Interests Groups (IRSPM) – *Complexity & Network Governance* **and** *Connecting Public Management Researchers & Practitioners for Improved Outcomes*.

Please note that there is no conference fee. Catering services (coffee and lunches), and the conference dinner will be covered by the event organizers.

For more information about this event, please contact: Aleksandar Avramovic or Romulo Pinheiro.

Call for abstracts:

Abstracts should clearly indicate how the paper links with both the specific track (see below) as well as the overall theme of the conference. The deadline for submitting abstracts (maximum 500 words) is **15th *December 2019 (extended deadine)***. Authors will receive confirmation of acceptance/rejection by 22nd December 2019. Please submit your abstract to: aleksandar.avramovic@uia.no

Upon acceptance, authors have until *15th March* to submit their extended abstracts or draft papers (minimum of 3500 words). The best papers in each panel will be invited by the scientific committee involved with the conference (track leaders) to be part of a special journal issue and/or edited book volume with a major international publisher (more details will be provided at the event in April).

AGENDA

	DAY 1 – 15 April 2020		DAY 2 – 16 April 2020
9.00-9.15	Welcome, Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. *Anne Halvorsen* and Head of department, *prof. Stefan Gänzle*	9.00-9.45	Keynote speech by *prof. Dag Ingvar Jacobsen*, UiA
		09.45-10.45	Paper presentations/Tracks cont.
9.15-10.00	Keynote speech by *prof. Robyn Keast, Southern Cross University (SCU), Australia*	10.45-11.00	Break
10.00-11.00	Presentation of research groups (GOLEP, EU, CeDiT, SIG: Complexity and Networks): prof. Romulo Pinheiro, prof. Jarle Trondal; Prof. Leif S. Flak; SIG representatives	11.15-12.00	Roundtable: Key Takeways & Cross-cutting themes, Track Leaders
11.00-11.15	Break	12.00-13.00	Lunch
11.15-12.00	Keynote speech by *prof. Jarle Trondal, UiA*	13.15-14.00	Keynote speech by *prof. Leif Flak*, IS & Cedit Director, UiA
12.00-13.00	Lunch	14.00-14.15	Break
13.15-17.30	Parallel Track sessions/Paper presentations	14.15-15.30	Roundtable with regional actors and practitioners
19.00	Conference Dinner	15.30-15.40	Closing remarks

TRACK 1: MANAGING COMPLEX GOVERNANCE NETWORKS

Track Leaders: Prof. Dag Ingvar Jacobsen (UiA), Prof. Robyn Keast (SCU) & Barbara Zyzak (UiA)

Although hierarchical modes of public governance still dominate, efficient policy making and implementation is increasingly dependent on a variety of actors and organizations at different levels of government as well as in different sectors of society. Thus, network governance – the governing of coordination between semi-autonomous actors in the absence of clear hierarchical lines – has been moved to the attention of both practitioners and academics. Research over the last two decades have given us important insights into how network functioning is affected by different modes of network governance organization, characteristics of the members in the network, the relationships and trust among them, as well as how overarching structures like general rules and regulations (meta-governance). Still, our knowledge of whether and eventually how such complex networks can be actively managed or led (management of complexities in network settings), and what type of managerial activity that seems best suited to different network modes. This panel thus invites papers – both theoretical and empirical - that address the active management of networks conducted by active actors or agents, focusing on who the managers are, their functions/tasks/role, what they do,

and what effects this have under different conditions. Papers connecting network management to more traditional theories of leadership are especially welcomed.

Track 2: GOVERNING COMPLEXITY: PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Track Leaders: Prof. Jarle Trondal (UiA), Prof. Rómulo Pinheiro (UiA) & Prof. Kerry Brown (SCU)

Polycrisis such as emergent climate crisis, recurrent financial instability, migration crisis, the ups and downs of civic unrest, and artificial intelligence continuously produce surprises and challenges for public governments and organizations. Times of societal ruptures and political crisis call upon public organizations to adapt, anticipate, reform and innovate - ruinously and at greater speeds. They are increasingly called upon to manage the unexpected – that is forward-looking problem-solving under uncertainty and imperfect information by organizational engineering (Simon 1983: 83; Weick and Sutcliffe 2001). Moreover, turbulent times challenges the scholarly community to modify existing theories and frameworks, and to invent new ones. The panel aims to fill a lacuna in contemporary studies of public governance and policy design by examining how public organizations govern uncertainty. The panel thus invites empirical and theoretical papers focusing on public governance in situations of complexity, unpredictability and fluidity. Questions in focus are many, such as what tools do public organization favor when handling situations of turbulence and uncertainty? How do organizations manage dilemmas, such as stability and change, innovation and resilience, integration and fragmentation, and so on? Moreover, what theoretical lenses are helpful in mapping and explaining how governments and organizations manage turbulence, how they approach complex and unfamiliar problems and solutions, and how they potentially try to establish order out of disorder?

Track 3: GOVERNANCE, INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Track Leader: Prof. Leif Skiftenes Flak (UiA) and Dr. David Noble (SCU)

Public sector organizations have used information and communication technologies (ICT) since World War II. It has been argued that shifts in technology have influenced the public sector over the years in several ways, e.g. related to centralization and decentralization, transparency, productivity, service quality and democratic communication with citizens. Use of new technologies often requires changes in work processes and organizational structures and thereby challenge the way public organizations function and how they are organized and governed. Emerging technologies, perhaps especially related to data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, are claimed to hold the potential of enabling further increase in e.g. service automation, automated decision making and in general making swift sense of large amounts of data. While the development may have a number of positive effects such as more efficient use of public funds, improved quality of public services and more effective political communication, we may also experience negative consequences, for example in the form of reduced transparency, privacy violations, tampering with democratic processes and increased divide between those that can utilize the technology and those that for various reasons cannot. This panel calls for conceptual and empirical papers that provide new insights on how digital technologies affect public organizations, governance and innovation mechanisms. Further, papers outlining positive and negative effects of digital technologies on legal frameworks and public values such as efficiency, participation and transparency are welcome.