

Trust-based public management - towards stewardship and innovative cultural change

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Proposal:

The debate about the role of trust in public management and society at large is vibrant. Since there are many relationships in many directions, it is necessary to reduce the complexity and cluster these relationships.

Theories of stewardship assume that public servants prioritize the public interest and guard it. Therefore, public servants can be trusted and the question is whether public servants can trust the public. On the other hand, economic-rationalist theories assume that public servants, much the same as other members of society, are guided by self-interest meaning that there are significant problems of trust, collective action and principal-agent relations.

According to the economic-rationalist approach which dominates the field trust is crucial for successful cooperation and effectiveness in organizations and in societies. Most of the literature on networks – both public and private - points at trust as a key success factor. Trust is thus seen as an important determinant of high performance. In turn, high public performance is claimed to lead to high public trust, although the empirical evidence to date appears inconclusive. Public trust is seen as a necessary ingredient for democratic legitimacy. If this is so, why do we not see more trust-based policies, cooperation and management? Clearly, trust is difficult to build, maintain and restore. In essence, it requires significant cultural changes towards stewardship and the great challenge is to develop innovative ways to explore and meet this challenge.

This panel focuses on exploring new insights into trust-based management, the place of trust in the approaches used by public organizations, and the implications for a public organization's ability to collaborate and for the creation of innovation and positive impact on society.

In this panel we explore the role of trust in public management in all its facets and different relationships. Possible, though not limiting, themes are:

- Trust-based organizational forms and governance mechanisms within public service delivery organizations.
- Trust-based models of leadership emphasizing positive impact on co-workers by developing sustainable relationships.
- The role of trust in public sector innovation and public value creation, especially in co-creation initiatives.
- The role of trust and distrust in public sector reform, especially those triggered by austerity.
- The role of trust, control and/or distrust in inter-organizational collaborations and contracting relationships.
- The contingent relationship between trust and control in public service delivery.
- Building, maintaining and restoring trust after violations, and then fostering it.
- Measuring trust within public service delivery, especially in comparative studies and when studying cross-cultural or cross-institutional trust.