

Connecting the study of collaborations:

Integrating separate case studies into a collective knowledge base

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The study of collaborative governance generates enormous interest among practitioners and scholars, but struggles to produce robust generalizations due to the lack of a shared knowledge-base. A multitude of single-case and low-n studies has been published over the past two decades. However, the extensive fieldwork required for studying networks limits the empirical scope of such rich descriptions, while large-n studies struggle to do justice to the contingencies of context and process in accounting for collaboration outcomes.

This panel will explore the possibilities of steering a middle course. Its aim is to imagine a more connected, systematic, and comparative study of collaborative governance. Its proposed lever is to jointly build the infrastructure for a shared knowledge-base. Participants are invited to submit rich small to medium-n comparative studies of collaborative cases. We particularly welcome papers developing interesting methodological comparative perspectives. In a transformative step, participants are then invited to feed their empirical insights into a shared analytical framework we are developing. This model tracks key components of collaborative governance such as institutional design, collaborative process, leadership, and innovative outcomes (based on Ansell & Gash, 2008; Torfing et al, 2014; Page et al, 2014). This analytical connection allows scholars to conduct larger cross-case comparisons and derive more robust theoretical generalizations.

We combine innovative and traditional panel formats to nurture both individual and collective insights. The first session of the panel is dedicated to a shared discussion of a rich two-page case study provided by the panel chairs (e.g. case-study of collaborative crime prevention in Copenhagen). All participating authors will reflect on this case to explore where their separate theoretical perspectives overlap and clash. The middle sessions are dedicated to reviewing and improving the individual papers. Throughout the panel we log all of the cases studied in our comparative case framework on parameters such as institutional design, process steps, and outcomes. The final session of the panel is dedicated to collectively analysing the patterns emerging from this integrated case dataset.

The combination of individual empirical work and collective analysis within this panel can help to build a shared knowledge base and turn the study of collaborative governance into a truly connected enterprise.