

## Abstract proposal IRSPM-conference

### EGOVERNMENT AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS.

USING NETWORK CONCEPTS AS THEORETICAL LENSES TO EXPLAIN INTERGOVERNMENTAL DATA SHARING PROJECTS

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#### PANEL:

Public Management in volatile times: e-government as enabler of public sector reform

#### KEYWORDS:

Intergovernmental data sharing – networks – Crossroads Banks – eGovernment

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### ABSTRACT

Both the Belgian federal and Flemish regional government have framed the development of a series of authentic information sources as a key solution to reduce administrative burden for companies and citizens as these crossroads banks allow the sharing of information between different government agencies at different levels of government. The ultimate goal is to realize a more integrated, efficient and effective government service delivery towards citizens and companies.

In our paper, we will compare the results of two case studies that elaborated on the participation of local governments within these intergovernmental data sharing projects. In the first case study (Snijkers, 2006a, 2006b), the connection of Flemish local welfare agencies on to the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) was analysed. The second case study provides insights in the disclosure of the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises (CBE) towards Flemish cities and municipalities.

Both case studies made use of network literature to explain the participation of local governments agencies within the projects. In particular, the authors (Snijkers, 2004; Snijkers, 2005; Vander Elst, Rotthier & De Rynck, 2011) mainly made use of Snellen's (2003) theoretical framework complemented with other theoretical insights about how networks function (see Kumar & van Dissel, 1996; Schermerhorn, 1975).

Following Snellen, networks consist of three different dimensions: a strategic, a power and an institutional dimension. The power dimension refers to the dependencies between the network's stakeholders (e.g. money, expertise, information, ...). The strategic dimension refers to the degree to which the objectives of the different members of the network con- or diverge to each other. Finally, the institutional dimension concerns the degree to which the interaction between the different stakeholders has been institutionalized.

Both studies offers us the opportunity to conduct a reliable comparison as they are conducted based on a similar research design in terms of the research strategy (case study), the research method ((semi structured) interviews with key actors) and the theoretical framework being applied (Snellen's framework). Moreover in both studies, the same variables were operationalized: conflict, cooperation, dependency, independency and the con- and divergence of the stakeholders' objectives.

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In particular, our comparison will focus on how these variables have influenced local welfare agencies and municipalities to connect on to respectively the CBSS and the CBE. Next, we will identify the similarities and differences between both cases and explain these differences based on the network features that characterize both intergovernmental data sharing projects.

The objective of this comparative analysis is to generate new empirical findings in how governments are setting up intergovernmental data sharing projects as insights in this phenomenon have remained rare (see for example Yang & Maxwell, 2011; Gil-Garcia, Ae Chun & Janssen, 2009). Next to our 'empirical objective', we also want to elaborate on the surplus of using network theories when analysing the development of intergovernmental eGovernment projects and the participation of local government agencies within these projects. In this way, this paper proposal also meets the call for papers in which an appeal is made to elaborate on "*which theoretical lenses could be used to help us understand and explain what is happening and its relationships with citizens, business (...)*" and to draw attention on to the "*the nature and impact of ICT-enabled changes in the public sector and its external relationships.*".

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