

Panel 28
XV IRSPM Conference
Value, Innovation and Partnership
Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
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**The politics and governance of public services
in developing countries**

This IRSPM panel will feed into a Special Issue of *Public Management Review (PMR)*, scheduled for 2012 (see below).

Chairs/joint editors

Willy McCourt (Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester)
Richard Batley (International Development Department, University of Birmingham)

Panel/Special Issue rationale

For most of the 1980s and 90s, public services as a specific form of developing and transitional country state activity got somewhat lost within public management theory and practice, as the New Public Management and the World Bank/IMF-sponsored 'Washington model' of public reform captured the attention of scholars and, forcibly, governments. Practical initiatives and debate focused on managerial devolution, contracting and the ubiquitous civil service reform and downsizing programmes (Batley and Larbi, 2004; McCourt and Minogue, 2001).

However, the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a revival of interest and a host of service delivery initiatives in response to policy developments which include:

- The importance of public services for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
- The World Bank's *World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People*
- The problem of under-investment in infrastructure following the international financial crisis of 1997/8
- Fragile and conflict-affected states, state-building and the role of services in state legitimisation

We adopt a broad definition of public services. It encompasses security services (e.g. policing) and infrastructure (e.g. water and sanitation) as well as personal services like education and health. It also encompasses services provided by both public and private agencies, whether for profit or not for profit (as long as there is at least a degree of 'publicness' in the benefits that the service confers).

Panel/Special Issue focus

We have a particular interest in two aspects of service delivery:

- The politics of public service delivery, including the way in which public services contribute to building and legitimising states, and issues of corruption and patronage
- The governance and organisation of services, including new understandings of provision by the state; the role of for-profit and not-for-profit providers; service delivery networks and partnerships (including public-private partnerships); and co-production between producers and consumers

We also welcome submissions on other aspects of service delivery in developing and transitional countries, including:

- Contributions to a theoretical understanding of service delivery
- Accountability relationships and provider responsiveness
- The impact of public services on different groups of citizens in terms of poverty, gender,

ethnicity etc.

- Financing of service delivery, particularly as this affects consumers' access, and producers' accountability and performance
- The relevance of OECD countries' experience to developing and transitional countries, and vice-versa
- Case studies of innovation in service delivery
- Evidence of the effects of decentralisation on service delivery

Contributors on these topics are encouraged to take account of any implications that their studies have for the politics and governance of services. That will create the possibility of dialogue between papers in the conference panel and in the Special Issue.

Submitting to the Panel and the Special Issue

Submissions should be sent to Willy McCourt (address below). Contributors should indicate whether they are interested in being considered for the IRSPM conference panel, or the Special Issue, or both.

Submissions for IRSPM and PMR Special Issue:

1 October 2010: Closing date for abstract submissions

30 November: Authors notified of outcome of their abstract submission

10 March 2011: Closing date for submission of final conference papers and submissions for the Special Issue (for the latter, see *PMR's* 'instructions for authors' at

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?issn=1471-9037&linktype=44>).

Information on IRSPM Dublin 2011 is available at <http://irspm2011.com/>.

Please contact either of the Panel Chairs/Special Issue joint editors with any queries. We very much look forward to receiving your contributions and to interacting with you at IRSPM.

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