

In Memoriam: Miriam Lips (1967-2024): An Appreciation of Her Life

The sudden and unexpected death, from cardiac arrest, of Miriam Lips at the age of only 56 came as a shock to her many friends and colleagues in the e-/digital government community. To those of us who knew her, she was a wonderful, insightful and engaging academic and friend and her death is a great loss to our field.

Miriam (whose real name was Ana Maria Barbara Lips) undertook her undergraduate studies in Erasmus university in Rotterdam where she graduated in 1991 with an MSc in Public Administration. She continued her education with an additional master's program, this time a European Master of Public Administration, a joint programme run by Erasmus and Leiden universities. In 1996 she was awarded her doctorate by Erasmus University for her dissertation entitled: *Autonomy in Quality: Ambiguity in Administrative Communication on the Development of Quality Assessment in Higher Education*. Immediately following this, she took up a position as an Assistant Professor in the Centre for Law, Public Administration and Informatisation at Tilburg University. In 2001 she was promoted to Associate Professor at the Tilburg Institute for Law, Technology, and Society (TILT). Miriam's energy, work rate and leadership were soon recognised by Tilburg where, in 2004, she was appointed Academic Director of the Master of Public Administration in the TIAS Business School. From 2004-2007 she also served as a Senior Research Fellow of the Netherlands Institute of Government.

In 2003, Miriam was invited by William Dutton to become a Research Fellow at the recently founded Oxford Internet Institute (OII), based in Balliol College, Oxford. Miriam's was the first such appointment made by the OII. During her time at the OII, Miriam worked closely with John Taylor, breaking new ground in e-government research. Together they developed a research proposal: "Personal ID and ID Management" that was successfully offered to the ESRC Programme "E-Society". Numerous journal articles followed, many completed after Miriam's subsequent move to New Zealand.

In 2007, she was appointed as the inaugural holder of the Chair in e-Government (later renamed the Chair in Digital Government), in the Schools of Government and of Information Management in Victoria University of Wellington (VWU), New Zealand. In New Zealand, Miriam showed the same qualities she had in the Netherlands, engaging in a variety of public services roles beyond her university duties. These external activities included membership of the New Zealand Data Futures Partnership Working Group, being an expert member of the Evaluation Advisory Group appointed by InternetNZ and several other contributions too numerous to list here. She resigned from VUW in 2024 to pursue other interests, but remained an adjunct professor at the university.

Throughout her career, Miriam has made several important contributions to the international community of e-government scholars. Back in 1996, shortly after completing her doctorate, Miriam became involved with the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA) study group on informatisation, at that time led by Wim van de Donk and John Taylor. In 2001, at the EGPA conference in Vaasa in Finland, Wim stood down to take up other duties and Miriam joined John Taylor as co-chair of what would eventually become the permanent study group on e-government. It was an appropriate combination for the time with John representing the first/founding generation of study group members and Miriam representing the growing ranks of young researchers entering what was, by this time, a rapidly expanding field. Over the following five years, John and Miriam developed and expanded the group. Miriam managed the conference and group membership with consummate skill and continued to display the leadership qualities, including at the EGPA board meetings, that marked her out. Her appointment in Wellington and John's wish to move on to other things meant that two new co-chairs were needed and Albert Meijer and Frank Bannister took over the as co-chairs for the

EGPA conference in Madrid in 2007. Today, the study group continues to prosper and is now the longest continuously meeting group in EGPA.

In 2001, it was also becoming clear that there was a need for good journals specialising in e-government and related topics as e-government was receiving scant attention in the wider public administration literature. In 2002, therefore, John Taylor, following discussions with IOS Press and Ignace Snellen, founded Information Polity. An earlier journal edited by Ignace Snellen and Wim van den Donk – Information Infrastructure and Policy – had no obvious link to rapidly evolving academic debates about digital government and e-government and John had been approached to do something different. Miriam was a key contributor to this development and became the journal's first Book Review Editor, a role she retained up to 2008 before switching to Associate Editor – International. In the latter role, she was instrumental in bringing IP to a broader international audience and laying the foundations for the continuing success of the journal. Miriam was appointed Editor-in-Chief in 2016, in which role she served for two years. Given the demands of her job in Wellington, Miriam felt she was over-committed and, following consultations, the editorship of the journal was passed to the present Editors-in-Chief, Albert Meijer and William Webster.

Miriam also made important contributions to other key conferences for e-government scholars outside of Europe. After moving to New Zealand, Miriam re-focused her attention from EGPA to the International Research Society of Public Management (IRSPM) and the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS). From 2008 till 2015, she organised and chaired the e-Government panel track at the Annual IRSPM Conference and she was an Appointed Member of the Management Board of the IRSPM from 2013 till 2017. From 2011 till 2016, she co-organised and co-chaired the Minitrack 'Transformational Government'

Miriam was an active researcher, winning numerous research grants including being, together with John Taylor, Principal Investigator for a two-year research project on "Personal identification and identity management in new forms of e-government", subsidised under the UK Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) e-Society Programme and located at the Oxford Internet Institute. During her academic career she published well over a hundred peer reviewed articles and conference papers and supervised nine PhDs. She published both strong empirical studies such as 'Information-intensive government and the layering and sorting of citizenship' (2007, with John Taylor and Joe Organ) and more conceptual think pieces such as 'E-government is dead: Long live public administration 2.0' (2012) and 'Open governance: A new paradigm for understanding urban governance in an information age' (2019, with Albert Meijer & Kaiping Chen). She published a number of books and edited or co-edited several others. In 2020, she published a major monograph/teaching text entitled Digital Government. Managing Public Sector Reform in the Digital Era, (reviewed in Information Polity in 2020), a work in which she demonstrated the breadth and depth of the knowledge of digital government that she had accumulated over many years.

Looking back on Miriam's career, one cannot but be impressed by her enormous energy, her leadership skills and her enthusiastic engagement in the worlds of both academe and of practice. She was a pathfinder and an innovator who believed not just in thinking in the abstract, but of rolling up her sleeves and solving real problems. Her contribution on so many fronts was immense. Her early death is a loss not just to her friends and family or even the field of digital government, but to society as a whole which is rapidly going through a process of digital transformation and needs inspirational thought leaders such as Miriam has been throughout her whole academic career.

Miriam is survived by her husband and two daughters (Laura and Julie) from an earlier marriage.

Frank Bannister (Emeritus, Trinity College Dublin), Albert Meijer (Utrecht University). John Taylor (Emeritus, Caledonian Business School). Karl Lofgren (Victoria University of Wellington). William Webster (University of Stirling)