



SAPIENZA  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

# EGPA2026 CONFERENCE

24-27 August Rome, Italy

CALL FOR PANELS



Public Governance for the  
Common Good: Human Intelligence  
Serving the Global Community

[iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/](https://iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/)



## EGPA Permanent Study Group 3 on Administrative History

**Ass. Prof. Toon Kerkhoff**; Leiden University, the Netherlands;  
[a.d.n.kerkhoff@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:a.d.n.kerkhoff@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)

**Prof. Stefan Fisch**; German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer, Germany;  
[sfisch@uni-speyer.de](mailto:sfisch@uni-speyer.de)

**Prof. Elisabetta Colombo**; University of Pavia, Italy;  
[elisabetta.colombo@unipv.it](mailto:elisabetta.colombo@unipv.it)

### *A PSG on Administrative History*

In his 1955 textbook, Public Administration scholar Leonard White noted how “every system of public administration is the product of many influences. Its form and content reflect its historical origin; existing patterns are a composite of practices and procedures both ancient and contemporary. No administrative system can be well understood without some knowledge of what it has been, and how it came to be what it is.” (White 1955) Taking a similar position, many scholars have over the years turned their attention to the history of public administration as a way to understand how public institutions and governance practices evolved over time and how past practices, systems and ideas shaped public administration in historical context (Rugge 2025).

A first central premise underlying this Permanent Study Group is that in order to understand both past and present political and administrative systems one needs to also understand and apply historical perspectives (e.g. Raadschelders 1994; Raadschelders et al. 2000; Tilly 2008). Historical research concerning the development of ideas about past realities of public service delivery, policy, bureaucracy, politics and the state also serves to discuss contemporary questions (e.g. Leff 1985; Neustadt and May 1986). The history of public administration provides insights into the long-term dynamics of change, continuity and diversity (Tholfsen 1967) of political-administrative practices, civil service systems and bureaucracies, and public policy, organization and management.

A second central premise of the PSG is the aim to bring together contemporary work by (Europe-focused) scholars on administrative history. While people in different departments of different universities across the world are actively working on various aspects of administrative history, much can be done to improve knowledge of each other’s work. This PSG aims to function as a platform to find out what people are working on,



which questions are being asked, which themes are being addressed, what historical and/or multidisciplinary methods and sources are being developed and deployed. The PSG aims to promote interdependency and to offer a collaborative, long-term platform for developing ideas, advancing research, and building an intellectual community that connects early-career researchers and seasoned experts alike.

This PSG wishes to connect to general themes of interest in PA-scholarship, based on the notion that any number of present-day issues and questions of governance inherently benefit from and – usually also already include (see Raadschelders et al. 2000) – a historical approach. This PSG is, for example, of interest to scholars on topics such as cutback management, leadership, digitalization or EU-relations, who are looking to also present and discuss historical angles to their work. The panel aims to draw people from various disciplines since administrative history as a field of study closely borders on many other academic fields of research such as public administration, sociology, anthropology, political science, history, philosophy and economics. The panel in particular also welcomes early career scholars and PhD students with an affinity to history and historical approaches to public administration to join us in Rome and beyond.

### *A call for papers*

We invite papers that – in the widest sense – explore the history of public administration, understood as the study of structures and processes in, and ideas about government in the past and the real or desired place of public functionaries therein (Raadschelders 1994, 120). Due to being a part of EGPA the main focus of this PSG is on European administrative history, but this of course includes Europe-related historical scholarship by non-Europeans, for example on colonial administrative systems or the history of international relations. We welcome a variety of approaches, ranging from empirical to theoretical and/or methodological contributions, from single to multiple case studies, from qualitative to quantitative historical work and international and/or longitudinal comparisons.

More specifically, papers could fall in (or combine) any of the following range of areas:

- Papers on the origins and evolution of **public administrations**, focusing on the development of administrative structures, personnel and activities over time. This includes different types of administrations — central, local and parastatal — as well as the administrative apparatuses of parliamentary institutions and constitutional bodies.



- Papers on the origins and evolution of various **specific policy areas**. Examples are the history of education management, food safety, sustainability management, cultural policies, migration, anticorruption or digitalization.
- Papers on the origins and evolution of **ideas about public administration**, examining, for example, how conceptions of its role, legitimacy, autonomy and relationship with politics have changed over time. Other topics may include the politics–administration dichotomy, administrative neutrality, public service ethics, state capacity, accountability, evolving understandings of administrative performance and its measurement, changing ideas about the skills, professionalism and competencies required of public personnel and shifting views on the relationship between citizens and government.
- Papers with **theoretical and/or historiographical** contributions, for example on the history of the field of public administration, on critical junctures, path dependency in administrative development and causation in history or on theoretical approaches to how historical legacies might interact with contemporary challenges and on the relation between administrative history and other relevant disciplines such as public administration and public management, law, economics or sociology.
- Papers on **methodology**. These could, for example, focus on strengths and limitations of comparative historical analysis, on doing archival research, process tracing, or historical institutionalism as a method.

### *A special panel section*

In Rome the PSG Administrative History is excited to host a special session on post-communist administration, convened by Astrid Hedin (Malmö University) and Rustamjon Urinboyev (Lund University) on **State Administration under Communism and After: Structures, Practices, and Legacies**. Based on panel papers, the aim is to submit a proposal for a special issue. A line-up of presenters is already established, so there is no call for papers for this session. However, all those interested are more than welcome to join and participate in the discussions on this great topic of historical interest.

### *Format and acceptance*

For the general PSG sessions, we invite paper proposals with an overview of the topic, question and approach, preferably grounded in literature and academic and societal relevance. Max. 1000 words, including references. Proposals should include names and affiliations of all authors and one e-mail address of one contact person per paper proposal.



**Please note** that quality of paper proposals as well as limits to capacity in Rome might force us to reject proposals. We will do our best to accommodate and/or suggest alternative PSGs where papers could also find a (better) home.

### *EGPA travel grant*

We encourage PhD students to also join this PSG. Please note that EGPA offers a **reduced fee for PhD students and young scholars** and also offers the possibility (for young researchers) to apply for the **EGPA travel grant**. You can find more information [here](#).

### *References*

- Leff, G. 1985. "The Past and the New." In *The Vital Past: Writings on the Uses of History*, edited by Stephen Vaughn. University of Georgia Press.
- Neustadt, Richard E., and Ernest R. May. 1986. *Thinking in Time. The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*. Free Press.
- Raadschelders, J. C. N., F. P. Wagenaar, M. R. Rutgers, and P. Overeem. 2000. "Against A Study of the History of Public Administration: A Manifesto." *Administrative Theory and Practice* 22 (4): 772–91.
- Raadschelders, Jos. 1994. "Administrative History: Contents, Meaning and Usefulness." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 60 (1): 117–29. 358.
- Rugge, Fabio. 2025. "Historiography and Public Administration: A Story of Disciplines." In *The Humanities and Public Administration: An Introduction*, edited by Eduardo Ongaro, Giovanni Orsina, and Lorenzo Castellani. Edward Elgar.
- Tholfsen, Trygve R. 1967. *Historical Thinking: An Introduction*. Harper & Row.
- Tilly, Charles. 2008. "Why and How History Matters." In *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, edited by Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly. Oxford University Press.
- White, L.D. 1955. *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration*. 4th ed. Macmillan.