



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

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## EGPA Permanent Study Group 15 on Collaborative Governance and Social Innovation

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The **PSG XV on Collaborative Governance and Social Innovation** invites scholars, researchers, professionals, and policymakers to submit their contributions to the EGPA Conference 2026, hosted by Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, from 24 to 27 August 2026. In line with the EGPA Conference theme, “*Public Governance for the Common Good: Human Intelligence Serving the Global Community*”, the PSG XV focuses on how collaborative governance and social innovation contribute to ethical, inclusive, and human-centred forms of public governance capable of addressing complex, transboundary, and polycrisis challenges.

**Collaborative governance** is understood not merely as a managerial arrangement or organizational model, but as an institutional expression of human intelligence in governance. It encompasses public judgment, ethical discernment, collective sense-making, and the capacity of diverse actors to co-create public value. While early scholarship emphasized horizontal relationships, trust-building processes, and voluntary coordination among actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012), more recent research has demonstrated that collaborative governance often unfolds “within the shadow of hierarchy”, where hierarchical interventions, regulatory mandates,



performance evaluation mechanisms, and coordinative involvement shape collaborative dynamics and outcomes (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009; Zhou & Dai, 2023). This perspective calls for a more nuanced understanding of how collaboration is initiated, structured, formalized, and sustained within institutional and bureaucratic contexts. Rather than opposing hierarchy and networks, contemporary research increasingly explores their interaction, examining how meta-governance strategies, institutional design, and varying degrees of formalization influence accountability, commitment, and long-term public value creation.

In the context of contemporary polycrisis and digitally interconnected governance systems, collaborative arrangements have become central mechanisms for involving public authorities, private actors, third-sector organizations, and citizens in co-designing and co-delivering public services (Agranoff, 2006; Klijn, 2008; Isett et al., 2011). Yet significant questions remain regarding leadership, coordination, performance, and legitimacy in complex networked settings (Cristofoli, Meneguzzo, & Riccucci, 2017). The digital transformation of government further reconfigures these dynamics, not merely by introducing new technological tools, but by reshaping institutional architectures, accountability mechanisms, and the distribution of authority among actors. Emerging concepts such as Government as a Platform signal a shift in how hierarchical steering, network coordination, and ecosystem governance intersect in digitally mediated environments (Cordella & Paletti, 2019).

**Social innovation** provides a pathway for transformative change and mobilizes critical resources to address polycrisis dynamics (Montgomery & Mazzei, 2021). It is widely understood as a novel mode of collaboration among public sector organizations, citizens, third-sector actors, and businesses aimed at creating public value (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012). Governments worldwide increasingly engage in multi-stakeholder collaboration to address complex societal challenges (Brandsen et al., 2016) and use social innovation as an instrument to co-produce public value and respond to public sector retrenchment (Sinclair & Baglioni, 2014). However, social innovation originally emerged both as a response to public sector deficiencies and as a grassroots reaction to neoliberal policy trajectories (Fougère et al., 2017). This dual origin has generated a persistent paradox between path continuity and path discontinuity in the role of public actors, who may simultaneously enable and constrain the development of social innovation initiatives (Avelino et al., 2019). In this regard, particular attention is devoted to how social innovation operates within the public sector, examining the evolving roles of public authorities as facilitators, regulators, coordinators, or strategic stewards, and assessing



how hierarchical interventions may enable, structure, or constrain collaborative processes.

Based on these theoretical insights, the PSG XV on Collaborative Governance and Social Innovation invites submissions and research projects focused on (but not limited to):

- The role of social innovation within the public sector: evolving institutional roles, governance configurations, and implications for public value creation. The PSG welcomes both in-depth case studies and cross-national comparative analyses that advance theoretical understanding, methodological rigor, and cumulative knowledge-building in the field.
- The interaction between horizontal collaboration and hierarchical steering in collaborative governance arrangements.
- The degree of formalization and institutionalization of collaborative governance (e.g., informal forums, formal agreements, joint policy instruments) and their effects on performance and accountability.
- Relationships between public actors and societal stakeholders in social innovation processes.
- Leadership, governance, and management for public value co-creation in collaborative settings.
- Drivers, barriers, and performance dynamics in cross-sectoral and multilevel collaboration.
- Comparative perspectives on collaborative governance and social innovation across administrative traditions (e.g., centralized vs. decentralized systems), policy sectors, and territorial levels, including manifestations of the “shadow of hierarchy” and variations in institutional design.
- Digital transformation, digital ecosystems, and Government as a Platform in collaborative governance.
- Human-centred digital governance: how digital tools can support rather than replace human intelligence in collaborative processes.
- Collaborative responses to global and transboundary crises (e.g., climate change, migration, public health, social inequalities).
- Social innovation and collaborative governance in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Learning, knowledge co-creation, reflexivity, and adaptive governance in collaborative ecosystems.
- Emerging trends and future challenges in collaborative governance and social innovation.



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### *Abstract format*

When submitting your abstract, please make sure that you follow these guidelines:

- **Title:** mention the title of your paper.
- **Authors:** mention the names and affiliations of all the authors. Use an asterisk (\*) to indicate the corresponding author.
- **Abstract:** provide a brief and concise summary of your work. The abstract should be between 800-1000 words and state the objectives, methodology, results, and implications of your research.
- **Keywords:** include 3-5 keywords that represent the content of your paper.

As in past editions, the PSG XIX will operate in close partnership and collaboration within the IIAS Study Group on *Social Innovation, Commons and Administration*, and with other relevant forums for public management and collaborative governance research, including:

- **European Academy of Management (EURAM)** – Strategic Interest Group on Public and Non-Profit Management
- **International Research Society for Public Management (IRSPM)** – Special Interest Group on Strategizing and Entrepreneurship for the Common Good
- **European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS)** – Public Sector–related sub-themes



## Practicalities

If you wish to present a paper in one of the Permanent Study Group's, Ad Hoc Group's, or Specialized Panel's sessions at the conference, please upload an abstract outlining your proposed conference paper. This may be done through the conference website.

## Important dates

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: April 6, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Booster Grant applications: April 15, 2026
- Acceptance notification and opening of registrations: April 20, 2026
- Deadline for submission of EGPA Travel Grant applications: April 26, 2026
- Full paper submission deadline and registration deadline: July 19, 2026

## Website

- <https://www.iias-iisa.org/egpa-2026-conference/>

## Submission

- <https://www.conftool.org/egpa2026/>
- Unless specified otherwise, 500-words limit for abstracts

## Contact

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