



IIAS2026 CONFERENCE

Seoul, South Korea

November 17-20

**Growth for Society: Collaborative
Governance, Social Innovation, and Public Value**



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Africa's Digital Future: Governing Artificial Intelligence, emerging technologies and institutional transformation

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Africa is entering a period in which emerging technologies are reshaping not only economies but also the nature of government itself. Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital public infrastructure, blockchain technologies, digital identity systems, fintech, satellite technologies, smart cities and advanced connectivity are creating opportunities for governments to redesign institutions, improve public service delivery and accelerate development (Avgerou, 2019; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023). Rather than following historical development trajectories established elsewhere, many African countries are adopting innovative technological solutions that bypass traditional stages of industrial and administrative development (Moyo, 2022).

The continent is increasingly demonstrating that resource constraints can stimulate institutional innovation. Mobile financial systems such as M-Pesa that revolutionised financial inclusion by enabling millions of citizens to make payments, transfer funds and access financial services via mobile phones without first requiring widespread bank branch networks is one example of development of the continent. In addition, digital health platforms, remote education, geospatial technologies, drone applications, AI-supported agriculture and digital identity programmes illustrate how governments are experimenting with new models of administration that are responsive to local realities while contributing to global policy innovation (Gillwald, 2021; Ojo, 2020).

At the same time, Africa faces significant governance challenges associated with digital transformation. Unequal infrastructure, cybersecurity threats, algorithmic bias, digital sovereignty, cross-border regulation, data governance, institutional capacity and workforce readiness require new approaches to public administration (UN E-Government



Survey, 2022). These challenges cannot be addressed through technology alone but require governments capable of governing rapidly evolving digital ecosystems while maintaining democratic accountability, regulatory legitimacy and citizen trust (Meijer, 2022).

This track explores how emerging technologies are transforming governance and public administration across Africa. It examines how governments can build institutions capable of governing the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions while promoting inclusive, ethical and sustainable digital transformation. Rather than viewing Africa as a technology adopter, this track positions the continent as a source of innovative governance solutions that can inform global debates on digital government, Artificial Intelligence governance and institutional transformation.

Link to general conference call

This track is situated within the broader **IIAS conference theme “Growth for Society: Collaborative Governance, Social Innovation, and Public Value”**. The general call highlights how sustainability, demographic shifts, digital transformation and inequality demand new forms of collaborative governance and social innovation. Africa’s experience with technologies, sovereign digital capabilities and institutional experimentation provides a unique vantage point for addressing these global challenges. By examining African digital future this track contributes to comparative debates on how public administration can mobilise technological disruption for societal resilience, legitimacy and inclusive growth (IIAS Call, 2026).

Indicative thematic areas

- Governing Artificial Intelligence in African public administration
- Digital public infrastructure and government modernisation
- Data governance, cybersecurity and digital sovereignty
- FinTech and digital identity for inclusive public service delivery
- Smart cities and technology-enabled urban governance
- Emerging technologies for agriculture, health, education and environmental management
- Institutional innovation for rapidly changing technological environments
- Public sector leadership for digital transformation on the African continent



- Workforce development and future public service capabilities
- Regulatory innovation focused on disruptive technologies
- Ethical governance of autonomous systems and emerging technologies

Guiding questions

- How should African governments govern Artificial Intelligence while promoting innovation and protecting citizens?
- What institutional reforms are required to prepare governments for rapidly evolving technologies?
- How can digital public infrastructure improve state capability and administrative performance?
- What regulatory approaches are most appropriate for emerging technologies in developing economies?
- How should governments balance digital innovation with cybersecurity, privacy and data protection?
- What role should African governments play in developing sovereign digital capabilities?
- How can digital identity, fintech and interoperable government platforms improve service delivery?
- What knowledge, skills and competencies will future public servants require for an AI-enabled governments?
- How can governments regulate autonomous systems while maintaining transparency and public accountability?
- What lessons from African technological innovation can influence global approaches to digital government?
- How should governments prepare for the governance implications of quantum computing, advanced robotics and next-generation communications?
- What institutional models will define the future digital state in Africa?

Contribution

This track positions Africa at the forefront of global debates on digital government, Artificial Intelligence governance and institutional transformation. Rather than viewing the continent through the lens of developmental challenges, it highlights Africa as an emerging source of innovation in public administration capable of informing future



governance models worldwide. The track invites contributions from scholars, policymakers and practitioners exploring how governments can successfully navigate technological development and disruption while building capable, resilient and future-ready public institutions.

References

- Avgerou, C. (2019). Digital innovation in developing countries: A critical perspective. *Information Technology for Development*, 25(2), 209–218.
- Dunleavy, P., & Margetts, H. (2023). *Digital-era governance: IT corporations, the state, and e-government*. Oxford University Press.
- Gillwald, A. (2021). *After access: ICT policy and regulation in Africa*. Research ICT Africa.
- Meijer, A. (2022). *The platform society: Public values in a connective world*. Oxford University Press.
- Moyo, D. (2022). *How the West was lost: Fifty years of economic folly*. Penguin.
- Ojo, A. (2020). Digital government in Africa: Strategies for public sector transformation. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 12(3), 45–67.
- United Nations. (2022). *UN E-Government Survey 2022: The future of digital government*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.



Practicalities

Key Links

- Conference website: <https://www.iias-iisa.org/iias-2026-conference/>
- Submission system: <https://www.conftool.org/iias2026/>
- Contact: iias-conference@iias-iisa.org

Important Dates

- Abstract / Panel submission deadline: **30 August 2026**
- Notification of acceptance and opening of registration: **30 August 2026**
- Full paper submission and registration deadline: **4 October 2026**

Submission Guidelines

- Unless otherwise specified in the track call, abstracts are limited to **500 words**. They should clearly outline the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, main findings (or expected findings), and implications.
- Accepted abstracts are expected to be developed into full papers.
- **Panels** are session proposals submitted under the main conference theme. A panel proposal includes a title, abstract, proposed chairperson(s), and a list of expected presentations. Panels are not required to produce full papers.

Evaluation

Proposals (papers and panels) are evaluated by the chair(s) (or co-chairs) of the track to which they are submitted. Evaluation criteria include:

- Academic quality and rigour
- Relevance to the track theme and overall conference theme
- Thematic fit and originality
- Clarity and quality of presentation

Paper Requirements

- Maximum length: **6,000 words** (all inclusive, including references).
- Structure: abstract, introduction, main body (developing the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, findings, and implications), conclusion, and references.

