

EGPA 2023 CONFERENCE

Zagreb, Croatia 5-8 September

**Steering the European Union through poly-crises storms:
The role of Public Administration**

CALL FOR PAPERS

PSG IV: Regional and Local Governance

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2023 Theme : Transformations in Regional and Local Government

This year's call on transformations in local and regional government has two themes. Firstly, we are keen to continue our work on intergovernmental relations and particularly on how both levels of government are adapting to external crises and challenges. Secondly, we are developing a new focus on digital transformations. This reflects colleagues' work on DIGILOG project which looks at the digitalization in local governments from a European comparative perspective (funded by DFG and SNF and involving Sabine Kuhlmann (Potsdam), Isabella Proeller (Potsdam), Reto Steiner (Zurich) and Renate Meyer (Vienna)).

Transformations in intergovernmental relations and the 'polycrisis'

This first theme focusses particularly on intergovernmental relations and new challenges currently posed by the combined political, social and environmental changes summed up in the word 'polycrisis'. The present polycrisis encompasses the continuing impact of Covid on societies, rising migration and climate change amongst other changes. This theme also builds on the policy-focussed approach to IGR developed through our study group's special issue of Local Government Studies on IGR and the Pandemic published in 2022 and our SG's current work on an edited book on New Perspectives on Intergovernmental Relations: Crisis and Reform covering ten European countries.

We are interested in further in-depth country studies of IGR and developing and testing out IGR theoretical frameworks especially in the comparative context. Accordingly, we would particularly encourage papers which deal with these questions:

- The directions of change in IGR in a particular country or countries and what are the underlying drivers?
- What are the problems of collective action and mobilisation confronting regional or/and local government actors vis-a-vis central/federal governments?
- What role do the representative associations of local government play in mediating between levels of government?
- To what extent have local governments sought to 'innovate' in response to greater freedoms and/or the need to do 'more with less'?
- Have central governments tightened controls over sub-state governments, given local governments more freedom but fewer resources or used performance management systems to impose central policies?
- Are municipal mergers or collaborative arrangements reasonable responses to the limited capacities of small municipalities/counties in order to increase their functional viability and capacity to act as significant institutional actors within the IGR system?

2. Digital transformations

Digital transformation is one of the most important reform trends for the local level of government. It is expected to fundamentally reshape the external relations of local governments, the delivery of local services, citizen participation in policy-making, and inter-municipal cooperation as well as collaboration with the private sector.

The adaptation to, and changes in, the internal organization and processes are also seen as key components of the digitized municipality, such as the establishment of new digitization units, the introduction of automated decision-making processes, and the use of artificial intelligence. Nevertheless, our empirical knowledge about the forms and patterns of digital transformation in European local governments remains scarce.

We, therefore, for this theme, encourage contributions that provide empirical evidence of observable and ongoing changes in the "essence" of local governments in the context of digital transformation initiatives. A particular focus could be on the explanatory value of different administrative cultures and traditions (e.g., continental European - Napoleonic, federal, Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, etc.), the strategies and practices adopted and adapted by actors, and the governance of digitalization reforms. In addition, we are very interested in the organizational implications of digital transformation, for example in effects on functionality, cooperation behaviour, and territoriality.

Accordingly, papers that address, but are not limited to, the following questions are of particular interest to us:

- Which theoretical approaches, also from other disciplines, can be used to examine digital transformation in local government studies?
- How does the digital maturity of local governments differ across policy areas and between as well as within countries?
- What are explanatory factors (e.g., institutional, technological, individual factors) for local government digital transformation?
- What are the internal dynamics (scale and pace) of digital transformation in European local governments?
- What (intended and unintended) effects of digitalization on local government can be empirically observed (e.g., in terms of performance, delivery of public value)?
- How does the digital transformation affect the functionality and territoriality of local governments (e.g., centralization or privatization of tasks, inter-municipal cooperation, relocation of branch offices)?
- To what extent do these effects of digitization differ according to the organizational form of the local governments studied (e.g., public enterprises)?
- How does the digitization of local governments relate to previous public sector reforms (e.g., strengthening of NPM vs. Weberian infocracy/algocracy)?

For both themes, we particularly welcome papers which seek to deliver empirical, research-based arguments and build a theoretical understanding of these issues; and papers which adopt a comparative approach, be it 'over time', 'cross-countries', or 'cross-service'. We are also particularly keen to include papers from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as Western Europe.

Abstracts should be submitted by **May 17, 2023**. Abstracts should be uploaded through the EGPA submission website.

Notification of acceptance will be **no later than May 31, 2023**. Those authors whose abstracts have been accepted should dispatch their **completed paper** to the convenors and upload it through the submission website **by August 17, 2023**.

Practicalities

Important dates:

- ✓ Deadline for submission of abstracts: May 17, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for notification to the authors: May 31, 2023
- ✓ Deadline for online submission of full papers: August 17, 2023
- ✓ EGPA PhD Symposium 5-6 September 2023
- ✓ EGPA 2023 Conference: 6-8 September 2023

EGPA 2023 Conference Website: <https://www.egpa-conference2023.org/>

EGPA 2023 Conference Management System:

<https://www.conftool.org/egpa-conference2023>

For any questions regarding EGPA 2023, please contact us at: f.maron@iias-iisa.org

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