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Governance, Social Innovation, and Public Value**



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Governing Uncertainty: Public Administration between natural–urban risk governance and the agentic AI transition

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Contemporary public administrations operate at the intersection of two transformations that, although often examined separately, share a common analytical core: the management of uncertainty. On one side, climate change, environmental degradation, rapid urbanisation and the growing frequency of extreme events – floods, wildfires, heatwaves and earthquakes, as well as urban unrest and threats to public safety – are exposing structural vulnerabilities in traditional regulatory frameworks and governance models. On the other side, the diffusion of Artificial Intelligence, and increasingly of agentic AI systems capable of autonomously coordinating multi-step administrative procedures, is reshaping the organisation and exercise of public power, the design of regulation and the legitimacy of digital decision-making. This track brings these two perspectives into a single conversation, asking how public administrations can govern interconnected natural, urban and technological risks while preserving constitutional principles, fundamental rights, the rule of law and institutional trust.

The track treats security and risk as foundational paradigms of contemporary public governance. Security is understood not merely as the preservation of order or the control of crime, but as the outcome of institutional processes designed to anticipate, interpret and manage uncertainty. Urban environments are privileged laboratories for observing this shift: cities concentrate environmental vulnerabilities, social inequalities, infrastructural interdependencies and security demands, compelling administrations to



manage overlapping hazards through integrated, multi-level arrangements. Within this frame, urban security emerges as a multidimensional governance challenge that links public order, social cohesion, spatial planning, technological infrastructures and citizens' trust – and that is increasingly mediated by data ecosystems and algorithmic tools.

A central concern is administrative decision-making under conditions of scientific uncertainty, contested or incomplete knowledge and severe time pressure. Public authorities must continually balance precaution, proportionality and urgency against fundamental rights and democratic accountability, while translating expert assessments and probabilistic risk analyses into regulatory design, emergency preparedness, crisis response and long-term planning. The integration of AI and agentic systems intensifies this challenge: where algorithmic agents interpret data, coordinate workflows across institutional and territorial boundaries and interact dynamically with external actors, the relationship between scientific expertise, administrative discretion and political responsibility is recomposed. Public law is therefore called upon not only to regulate technological and environmental innovation, but to guide and shape it, ensuring that AI strengthens rather than replaces human intelligence and remains aligned with the public interest and the common good.

The track also foregrounds the normative and democratic dimensions of risk governance. Accountability, transparency and responsibility are especially salient where decisions are taken under uncertainty and may carry significant social, economic, environmental and public – safety consequences – and where those decisions are increasingly supported, or partly delegated, to automated systems. Questions of administrative responsibility after disaster, of explainability and contestability of AI-supported choices, and of post-event institutional learning are examined together, as facets of a single problem: how administrations sustain legitimacy when they act on the basis of imperfect knowledge and powerful but opaque technologies. Particular attention is devoted to public trust, citizen engagement and communication strategies as conditions for societal and urban resilience and for the acceptability of administrative action in both environmental and digital domains.

Adopting a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective, and welcoming experiences and regulatory approaches from within and beyond the European Union, the track invites theoretical and empirical contributions that bridge administrative theory, public law, public management, political science, computer science and ethics. The objective is to



advance understanding of how public administrations can adapt their structures, capacities and decision-making processes to govern complex, systemic and transboundary risks – natural, urban and technological alike – fostering resilience while maintaining democratic legitimacy in an increasingly uncertain and interconnected environment.

Indicative thematic areas

Risk, security and the governance of uncertainty

- Administrative decision-making under scientific uncertainty: precaution, proportionality, discretion and accountability in natural risk management.
- From prevention to resilience: institutional capacities for anticipation, adaptation and long-term risk reduction.
- Urban security as risk governance: prevention, anticipation and democratic legitimacy beyond reactive law enforcement.
- Multi-level and networked governance: coordination challenges across local, regional, national and supranational levels, and with private actors and civil society.
- Accountability after disaster: administrative responsibility, blame avoidance, public trust and institutional learning.

Artificial intelligence, agentic systems and the transformation of public power

- Agentic AI in public organisations: autonomous management of administrative procedures and cross-boundary workflow coordination.
- Designing and governing AI to remain aligned with constitutional principles, fundamental rights and the rule of law.
- Experimental and narrative-based governance: regulatory sandboxes, digital identity and trust frameworks, ID wallets and interoperable infrastructures.
- AI-driven spatial and urban governance, AI-enabled health governance, and AI in local public services.
- Innovation-driven public procurement, interoperable data ecosystems, and AI for welfare, inclusion and the common good.



Crossing the two perspectives

- The interaction between scientific expertise, algorithmic mediation and administrative discretion in risk-based regulation.
- Legitimacy, transparency and contestability of AI-supported decisions in environmental, urban security and emergency contexts.
- Resilience, preparedness and crisis response in the age of data-driven and agentic public administration.

On-site sentinels: environmental sensors and in-field monitoring infrastructures

A distinctive area concerns “on-site sentinels” – the networks of environmental sensors and Internet-of-Things monitoring devices increasingly deployed in territories and urban environments to detect, measure and transmit data on natural and infrastructural hazards in real time. These distributed monitoring infrastructures act as the perceptual layer of risk governance and as the empirical basis for early warning systems, agentic decision-support and data-driven coordination. Their diffusion raises questions that are simultaneously legal and non-legal, and that public administrations must address jointly.

- Legal: allocation of competence and responsibility for the installation, ownership and maintenance of sensor networks across administrative levels and between public and private actors.
- Legal: liability and accountability for harm arising from sensor malfunction, false negatives, missed alerts or failure to act on transmitted data.
- Legal: data protection, privacy and surveillance limits where environmental monitoring intersects with the observation of persons, spaces and behaviours in urban settings.
- Legal: evidentiary value and procedural use of sensor-generated data in administrative decisions, emergency measures and post-disaster proceedings.
- Non-legal: technical reliability, calibration, sensor coverage gaps and the risk of uneven monitoring across territories and vulnerable communities.
- Non-legal: organisational capacity to interpret continuous data flows, integrate them with expert knowledge and translate them into timely operational decisions.
- Non-legal: interoperability, data governance and cybersecurity of sentinel infrastructures within wider digital ecosystems and agentic AI systems.



- Non-legal: public trust, transparency and citizen engagement in sensor deployment, including community-based and participatory monitoring.

Methodological approach and submissions

The track adopts an open and pluralistic methodological stance. It welcomes qualitative designs – comparative and single-case studies, legal and policy analysis, document analysis, interviews and process tracing – as well as quantitative and mixed-methods work drawing on survey data, administrative datasets and policy evaluations. Longitudinal and post-event studies that capture institutional learning, adaptation and reform are particularly encouraged, as are conceptual and theory-driven contributions that refine existing frameworks or develop new analytical models. Submissions are invited from early-career and senior scholars across public administration, public law, public management, political science, computer science and ethics.



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.

